# 0 L . III.2

## RAIMON PANIKKAR

## CHRISTIANITY

PART TWO
A Christophany



### Opera Omnia

Volume III Christianity

Part Two

A Christophany

#### Opera Omnia

I. Mysticism and Spirituality Part 1: Mysticism, Fullness of Life Part 2: Spirituality, the Way of Life

II. Religion and Religions

III. Christianity Part 1: The Christian Tradition (1961–1967) Part 2: A Christophany

IV. Hinduism
Part 1: The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari
Part 2: The Dharma of India

#### V. Buddhism

VI. Cultures and Religions in Dialogue Part 1: Pluralism and Interculturality Part 2: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

VII. Hinduism and Christianity

VIII. Trinitarian and Cosmotheandric Vision

IX. Mystery and Hermeneutics
Part 1: Myth, Symbol, and Ritual
Part 2: Faith, Hermeneutics, and Word

X. Philosophy and Theology Part 1: The Rhythm of Being Part 2: Philosophical and Theological Thought

XI. Sacred Secularity

XII. Space, Time, and Science





Founded in 1970, Orbis Books endeavors to publish works that enlighten the mind, nourish the spirit, and challenge the conscience. The publishing arm of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Orbis seeks to explore the global dimensions of the Christian faith and mission, to invite dialogue with diverse cultures and religious traditions, and to serve the cause of reconciliation and peace. The books published reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official position of the Maryknoll Society. To learn more about Maryknoll and Orbis Books, please visit our website at www.maryknollsociety.org.

Copyright © 2015 by Fundació Vivarium Raimon Panikkar, Tavertet International Copyright handled by Editoriale Jaca Book Sp.A. Milan

English edition, copyright © 2016 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302. Manufactured in the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Queries regarding rights and permissions should be addressed to: Orbis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Panikkar, Raimon, 1918-2010, aurhor,

Christian tradition / Raimon Panikkar; edited by Milena Carrara Pavan.
pages cm. — (Christianity; part two) (Opera omnia; volume III)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-62698-168-3 (cloth)

1. Christianity. 2. Christianity-Philosophy. 3. Theology.

4. Philosophical theology. I. Carrara Pavan, Milena, editor. II. Title. BR121.3.P36 2015

230—dc23

#### SERIES FOREWORD

All the writings it is my privilege and responsibility to present in this series are not the fruit of mere speculation but, rather, autobiographical—that is, they were first inspired by a life and praxis that have been only subsequently molded into writing.

This Opera Omnia ranges over a span of some seventy years, during which I dedicated myself to exploring further the meaning of a more justified and fulfilled human lifetime. I did not live for the sake of writing, but I wrote to live in a more conscious way so as to help my fellows with thoughts not only from my own mind but also springing from a superior Source, which may perhaps be called Spirit—although I do not claim that my writings are in any way inspired. However, I do not believe that we are isolated monads, but that each of us is a microcosm that mirrors and impacts the macrocosm of reality as a whole—as most cultures believed when they spoke of the Body of Siva, the communion of the saints, the Mystical Body, karnan, and so forth.

The decision to publish this collection of my writings has been somewhat trying, and more than once I have had to overcome the temptation to abandon the attempt, the reason being that, though I fully subscribe to the Latin saying scripta manent, I also firmly believe that what actually matters in the final analysis is to live out Life, as witnessed by the great masters who, as Thomas Aquinas remarks in the Summa about Pythagoras and Socrates (but not about Buddha, of whom he could not have known), did not write a single word.

In the twilight of life I found myself in a dark forest, for the straight path had been lost and I had shed all my certainties. It is undoubtedly to the merit of Sante Bagnoli, and of his publishing house Jaca Book, that I owe the initiative of bringing out this Opera Omnia, and all my gratitude goes to him. This work includes practically all that has appeared in book form, although some chapters have been inserted into different volumes as befitted their topics. Numerous articles have been added to present a more complete picture of my way of thinking, but occasional pieces and almost all my interviews have been left out.

I would like to make some practical comments which apply to all the volumes:

- In quoting references, I have preferred to cite my previously published works following the general scheme of my publications.
- Subject matter rather than chronology has been considered in the selection, and thus the style may sometimes appear uneven.

vi Christianity

Even if each of these works aspires to be a self-sufficient whole, some ideas
recur because they are functional to understanding the text, although the
avoidance of unnecessary duplication has led to a number of omissions.

4. The publisher's preference for the Opera Omnia to be put into an organic whole by the author while still alive has many obvious positive features. Should the author outlive the printer's run, however, he will be hard put to help himself from introducing alterations, revisions, or merely adding to his original writern works.

I thank my various translators, who have rendered the various languages I have happened to write in into the spirit of multiculturalism—which I believe is ever relevant in a world where cultures encounter each other in mutual enrichment, provided they do not mislay their specificity. I am particularly grateful to Milena Cartara Pavan, to whom I have entrusted the publication of all my written works, which she knows deeply, having been at my side in dedication and sensitivity during the last twenty years of my life.

R.P.

#### Contents

Introductionxv			
SECTION I: CHRISTOPHANY IN THE WORLD			
1.	TRISANGAM: THE JORDAN, THE TIBER, AND THE GANGES—THE THREE KAIROLOGICAL MOMENTS OF CHRISTIC SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS		
2.	THE COSMIC CHRIST: A NEGLECTED ASPECT OF MODERN CATHOLICISM		
3.	THE NEW ROLE OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES IN ASIA. 35 An Injunction to Proclaim the Gospel		
	the Only Chance		

	Universities Should Lead the Intellectual and Corporate
	Search for Alternatives
	The "Option for the Poor" Is a University Challenge
	Christian Universities as Centers of Autochthonous Life
	The "Conversion" of Religious Traditions
	Practical Proposals
4.	UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY:
	A CHRISTIAN CONSIDERATION53
5.	TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF INTERCULTURATION:
	THE CASE OF INDIA63
	The Sociological Aspect
	Three Models of Christian Inculturation
	The Situation Today
6.	ON CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?71
	Identity in Pluralism72
	A Thesis by Way of Hypothesis
	The Pluralistic Genesis
	Analysis of the Thesis79
	The Christian Confession79
	The Community's Acceptance
	Philosophical Reflections
	Two Ways of Thinking about Identity83
	The Nonobjectifiable Nature of Self-Identity
	Theological Considerations
	The Categorical and the Transcendental Christian Identity
	Conclusion
	SECTION II: CHRISTOPHANY: THE FULLNESS OF MAN
Pre	face
	PART 1: THE CHRISTOPHANIC EXPERIENCE
1.	A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTOLOGY107
	The Point of Departure
	The Situation of the World
	The Limits of Christology
2.	THE TASK OF CHRISTOPHANY113
	Christology and Christophany113
	The Literary Genre
	The Divine Manifestation

Contents ix

3.	THE CHRISTOPHANIC EXPERIENCE	123
	The Cosmovision	123
	The World of Interiority	125
	Mystical Language	130
	Seek Yourself	132
	Seek Me	132
	Búscami en Ti	136
	PART 2: THE MYSTICISM OF JESUS THE CHRIST—	
	THE EXPERIENCE OF JESUS	
1.	THE APPROACH	143
	The Problem	144
	Prolegomena	144
	The Environment	147
	The Starting Point	150
	The Text	
	The Context	152
	The Pretext	
	Three Anthropologies	
	The Individualistic Approach	159
	The Personalist Approach	
	The Ådhyātmic (Pneumatic) Approach	
	Existential Inquiry	
	The Status Quaestionis	
	Personal Experience	
	The Search for Credibility	
2.	THE EXPRESSIONS	10
2.	Abba, Patër.	
	The Texts	
	The Interpretation	
	The Experience	
	The Father and I Are One.	
	The Texts	
	The Interpretation	
	The Experience	
	It Is Good That I Leave	
	The Texts	
	The Interpretation	
	The Experience	.22

x Christianity

	THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST         235           1 me suttam         235           padyāmi*         237		
	r-puruşa"238		
	PART 3: CHRISTOPHANY—THE CHRISTIC EXPERIENCE		
NINE SŪTRA243			
1.	Christ Is the Christian Symbol for the Whole of Reality		
2.	The Christian Recognizes Christ in and through Jesus		
3.	The Identity of Christ Is Not the Same as His Identification		
4.	Christians Do Not Have a Monopoly on the Knowledge of Christ 253 $$		
5.	Christophany Transcends Tribal and Historical Christology256		
6.	The Protological, Historical, and Eschatological Christ Is a Unique and Selfsame Reality, Distended in Time, Extended in Space, and Intentional in Us		
7.	The Incarnation as Historical Event Is Also Inculturation		
8.	The Church Is Considered a Site of the Incarnation		
9.	Christophany Is the Symbol of the <i>Mysterium Coniunctionis</i> of Divine, Human, and Cosmic Reality		
Epilogue			
A Final Word			
Appendix: A Letter to My Bishop			
Bibliography			
Glossary			
Index of Names			
Index of Original Texts in This Volume			
4bo	About the Author		

#### ABBREVIATIONS

#### Hindū Scriptures

ARAitareya-brāhmaṇa AVAtharva-veda RGBhagavad-gītā RIIBrhadāranyaka-upanisad CUChādogya-upanişad IdIIsa-upanisad JabUJābāla-upanisad

Jaiminīya-upanişad-brāhmana JaimUB

KaivU Kaivalya-upanisad KathU Katha-upanisad KausU Kausitaki-upanisad KenUKena-upanisad MahanarU Mānārāyana-upanisad MaitU Maitrī-upanisad MandU Māṇdūkja-upanisad Mānava-dharmašāstra Manu

MBMahāhdārata MundUMundaka-upanisad PaingU Paingala-upanisad

RV

Rg-veda SBSatapatha-brāhmana SUŚvetāśvatara-upanisad TBTaittirīva-brāhmana TMRTāṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa

TUTaittirīya-upanişad

#### Christian Scriptures

Ac Acts Col Colossians Dan Daniel Dt Deuteronomy Еp Ephesians F.x Exodus

xii Christianity

Ez Ezekiel
4 Ezra Fourth Ezra
Gal Galarians
Gn Genesis
Habakkuk
Hag Haggai

Heb Letter to the Hebrews

Hos Hosea Is Isaiah Tas **James** JЬ lob Jg **Judges** John In Ion Ionah Tos **Joshua** 

Jos Joshua
Jr Jeremiah
Lk Luke
Lv Leviticus
Mc Micah
Mk Mark
Mt Matthew

Nb Numbers
1 Co First Letter to the Corinthians

1 Co First Letter to the Cori 1 Jn First Letter of St. John 1 Kgs First Kings

1 Pet First Letter of Peter
1 Sam First Samuel

1 Th First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Tim First Letter of Timothy

Phlm Philemon
Ph Philippians
Pr Proverbs
Ps Psalms
Qo Qohelet
Rev Revelation

Rom Letter to the Romans Si Sirach

Si Sirach
Song Song of Songs
Tr Titus

2 Co Second Letter to the Corinthians

2 Kgs Second Kings

2 Mac Second Maccabees

Abbreviations xiii

2 Per 2 Perer

2 Tim Second Letter of Timothy

Ws Wisdom

#### Others

Adv. haer. Irenaeus, Adversus haereses
AV Authorized Version
BC Biblia catalana
BJ Bible de Jérusalem
Caes. Plutarch, Caesar
Aristotle, Cateevories

C. gentes. Thomas Aquinas, Contra gentiles

CIC Codex Iuris Canonici (Code of Canon Law)

Conf. Augustine, Confessions

De div. nom. Dionysius, De Divinis Nominibus ("On the Divine Names")
De myst. theol. Dionysius, De mystica theologica ("On Mystical Theology")

Denz. Heinrich Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum

De sacram. Ambrose, De sacramentis

Dom. VIII post Pentec.

Roman Missal, Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Epist. Basil, Letters of St. Basil of Caesarea
Epist. ad Eph. Ignatius Antioch, Epistle to the Ephesians

Epist. ad Parthos Augustine, In Epistolam Joannis Ad Parthos Tractatus Decem

Epist. in I Cor. John Chrysostom,

Ex Officio Smi. Sti Ex Officio Smi. Sti. Ati n. 71

Expos. in Ioan. Eckhart, In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus

Fragm. Heraclitus, Fragments

Fragm. Philolaus of Kroton, Fragments
Homil. Pasch. Cyril of Alexandria, Homilia Paschalis
In Cant. Bernard, In Canticum Canticurum Expositiae
In Ezech. St. Gregory the Great, Homilia in Ezechielm
In Iohan. Augustine, In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus
Cyril of Alexandria, In Iohannis Euangelium

I Sent. Bonaventure, Commentaria in quatuor Libros Sententiarum
KI King James Version

KJ King James Version
Knox Knox Bible
Met. Aristotle, Metaphysics
NAB New American Bible
NácarColunga
Nácar-Colunga Bible

NEB New English Bible
NJB New Jerusalem Bible

xiv Christianity

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

PG J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca,

Paris, 1857–1866

Phileb. Plato, Philebus

Phys. Aristotle, Physics

PL J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina,

Paris, 1844-1855

Quaest. Disp.

RV

de Pot. Dei Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei

Revised Standard Version

Serm. Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermones de diversis
Strom. Clement of Alexandria, Stromata
Sum. theol. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae

Theat. Plato, Theaetetus

#### INTRODUCTION

The adjective "Christian" may refer to Christendom (a civilization), Christianity (a religion), or Christianness (a personal religiosity). During the medieval period of Christian civilization, it was almost impossible to be a Christian without belonging to Christendom. Not so long ago, it was very difficult to claim to be a Christian without belonging to Christianity.

Today there are more and more people who consider the possibility of being Christian as a personal attitude, without belonging to Christendom or adhering to Christianity as an institutional structure. I am not speaking of an individualistic position but of a personal attitude, keeping in mind that "person" always implies community. The Christian approach is indeed eccletaid, but this word is not simply a synonym for an established organization. Ecclesia (church), strictly speaking, implies an organization not an organization requires a soul, a life. An organization requires a soul, a, a reason for it se existence.

The thesis at the basis of these reflections is the following; both history and anthropology reveal three kairological moments in Christian consciousness. They are kairological and not simply chromological, because they mutually imply and permeate one another. Christian maturity, personal as well as historical, consists in the harmonious and therefore hierarchical interplay of three dimensions, which are manifest in Man as the material/juridical, the intellectual/doctrinal, and the mystical/experiential. Our analysis also suggests that there has been a sociological preponderance, often imbalanced, of one or another of these three dimensions, and that the third Christian millennium represents an appeal to the Christic conscience to live more deeply the third dimension.

These are important distinctions. To be Christian as synonymous with being a member of Christendom belongs primarily to the past and, in the dreams of a few, to the future—but for the majority of Christians this is not a matter of concern. Their secularized "Christendom" is identified in sowereign states. Despite everything, the spirit and the reality of Christendom are still alive, and cannot be completely eliminated from the Christian consciousness. Even in our day some Christians, while recognizing the failure of Constantine, Charlemagne, Boniface VIII, Alexander VI, and others, or dreaming of a purified theocracy such as Dante conceived long ago and Soloviev more recently, hope to restore a new and renewed Christendom.

The theological argument in favor of Christendom still persists and does not lack strength. If the Christic event means anything in the history of humanity, it is because of the union—with distinction but without separation—of the Human and the Divine. This event unites (divine) transcendence with (human) immanence, xvi Christianity

without being trapped in monism, spiritual or material, or in any metaphysical dualism.

Not only is Christ totally divine and totally human, but we ourselves are called to be fully human and fully divine. Society itself, therefore, has a transcendent vocation.

To put it in different words, we must distinguish, but we cannot completely separate, the political order from the religious order, Justice, for example, belongs to both, and must therefore become incarnate in society. It is important to realize that, when the dikaiosynē of the Gospel refers to the kingdom of God and His justice (Mt 6:33), there is no distinction between political justice and religious justification. The natural/supernatural dichotomy is lethal on both sides. Religion cannot be separated from life. The Christic Event means an Incarnation not only as an individual happening but as a historic action in every sense. We should therefore appreciate the efforts toward restoration undertaken by those thinkers and Christian statesmen who, having overcome the fever of individualism and the crisis of the Enlightenment, strive to reconstruct the lost unity of life and civilization and return to the ideal of Christendom.

The strength of this ideal of Christendom is its holism: it embraces the whole of Man, does not allow compartmentalization, is truly global, and offers us a place where we can be fully ourselves. We are not Christian on one side, and Coptic, Irish, capitalist, Marxist, or whatever else on the other. However, its great dangers and temptations are totalitarianism, on the one hand, and fanaticism, on the other. It is not possible to homogenize everything without mutilating human nature. I suspect that today's "New World Order," like the "Holy Alliance" of an earlier age, is nothing more than an attempt to restore the lost ideal of Christendom. The latter at least offered an escape valve through transcendence. But, today, the deeds of God through the Franks (Det gesta per francos) have become Operation Desert Storm; the names are revealing.

It is part of human nature as well as Christian dynamism to build "smaller environments" where the human or Christian ideal of a full life may be visible in the smallest details. In the past, such environments were called Christian Empire or Christian Nation (even the Jesuit reductiones in Paraguay), and later on, religious orders; now we have new sects, churches, and movements. All these are ambivalent—and not totally obsolete—phrases. Nevertheless, the Christic event cannot be identified with what we call Christendom: His kingdom is not of this world.<sup>2</sup> There also exist Christianity and Christianness; in the Father's house there are many mansions!<sup>9</sup>

When Christendom began to decline as a political and religious regime in the sixteenth century, its place in Christian consciousness was increasingly taken by Christianity as religion. To be Christian as a member in Christianity means to belong to one religion among others. The Christian religion may be more or less pure than

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> [Ed. note: Respectively, the great works that God performed through the Franks (Charlemagne) and Operation Desert Storm during the Gulf War.]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See In 18:36.

<sup>3</sup> See In 14:2.

Introduction xviii

others, but it would be not only an abuse of language but abusive language to denounce other religions as false or deny them the character of religion. Relatively little notice has been taken of the difference between believing in a single world order, in one Christendom, and believing in a single true religion in the contemporary meaning of the word, which was not that of Augustine when he wrote De vera religione.

Those who speak of the world marker, global democracy, or universal technology are still living in a kind of Christendom ideology—which leaves no place for other world orders. However, there may be a plurality of religions, even though all may defend their own as the true one. Those who oppose a universal Christendom, whether religious or secularized, are burned as herectics, fought as terrorists or eliminated as dangerous elements because they challenge an inviolable status quo.

The problems of Christianity as a religion differ from those of Christendom as an integral and complete human order. Less than two centuries ago, Catholics who denied the 'divine right' of the Papal States were excommunicated. Those who questioned the burning of heretics were considered to be acting 'against the will of the Holy Spirit' (see Denz., no. 1482). Today no Catholic Christian feels obliged to obey the rules, laws, and prescriptions of medieval and Renaissance popes; such obligations were part of Christendom, not of Christianity. But problems of conscience present themselves even today, for many Catholics who have not assimilated the change from Christendom to Christianity—unlike Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, Luther, Vives, and Comenius, just to mention some personages whose lives ran 'parallel' to Christendom.

Here we should add an observation similar to that made on Christendom. Papal uncios<sup>4</sup> belong to Christendom and yet they still exist, and their function may still possess a certain historical justification. Canon law is still binding, and papal encyclicals still have authority—to use examples from Catholicism—but they no longer exhaust the modes of being Christian, much less Catholic. We no longer need to side with the Guelphs or the Ghibellines, or to vote for the right or the left, in order to be Christian.

Once again, we must defend Christian consistency within Christianity meant as a doctrine. Man is an intelligent being, and all that is intellectual belongs to his nature. It is no possible to have a church without a distinctive and uniting ideological infrastructure. A creed seems indispensable to identify the Christian. But Man is more than res cogitans (Descartes), even if one tried to rename it roseau pensant (Pascas). Christianity does not exhaust the Christic.

Not enough attention has been given, either, to the rupture within the Christian consciousness brought about by the passage from Christendom to Christianity. Once Christianity identifies itself as an event formulated in a creed, the creed becomes something symbolic ("Symbol of the Apostles") and of the heart (the word credo has been popularly related to kardia, heart). The meaning of dogmata, which the Latins still translated as placita, has evolved from a well-considered opinion of the

<sup>4 [</sup>Ed. note: Ambassadors of the Holy See to the various nations.]

xviii Christianity

majority into a rigid and unchangeable formulation. The anthropological basis of Christianity is born with modernity: Man as res ogitans, and the logos as a ratio. But Man is not just thought, and thinking is not simply conceptualizing. In brief: Christianity, understood as a purely doctrinal system, is in crisis.

On the other hand, there is no need to underline the grandeur of Christianity as a doctrinal system. Intelligence is perhaps the noblest part of Man, and the articulation of faith as belief is a human imperative. The Christian is identified by his or her beliefs. But, as I have said so many times, identification is not a the same as identity, therefore Christian identification is not a synonym for Christian identification is not as youroum for Christian identified.

In our time, a third aspect of our subject is strongly emerging: to be Christian may also be understood as the confession of a personal faith that adopts an attitude similar to that of Christ, to the degree that Christ represents the central symbol of one's life. I call this aspect Christianness (in German: Christichkeit; in Italian: Cristiania). By this name I hope to suggest a new but genuine human consciousness. This new religiosity is spreading all over the world, especially among the young, and appeals to those who have become liberated from the over-institutionalization of Christianity, especially in its official form. In any case, it is a sociological fact, an ecclesial reality. These are not simply new ideas, or updated ones. New wine requires new wineskins; patching up old ones will not do.6

We are dealing with a muration in the very self-understanding of the Christian. In the final analysis, it means a leap in the history of Being through the achievement of a new level of consciousness in Man. I have dealt with this phenomenon elsewhere, describing it as the "end of history." We can summarize it as the end of belief in the temporal one-directional nature of Being, Metaphysics is not an atemporal discipline. Time and Being are inseparable. God is free of time (zeitfrei), but not without time (zeitlos): time does not reach God, but He is not outside it.

Christianness constitutes the Christian contribution to this cosmic change in the adventure of the universe in which we are all involved. We should not forget that the human species is in danger of becoming extinct, whether by self-destruction or by allowing the biosphere to destroy it. To study theology or science today without raking this into account would be intellectually shortsighted and spiritually insensitive.

Christianness does not need to be interpreted as an exclusively historical fact. It is a factum, something we are in the process of creating, but it is not being made only by us. Elsewhere I have distinguished between Christianity, church, and Christ, referring to the social aspect of religion, its sacramental dimension, and its mystical core. It is the last, which might be called the Christic Principle, that is related to Christianness.

Christianness is not an individualistic position, as if the Christian event were something we made up according to our taste, an uncontrolled anarchy that capri-

<sup>5</sup> In the original Italian text: "aggiornamento," a phrase introduced by Pope John XXIII and then used to qualify the whole Vatican Council II. [n.d.r.].

<sup>6</sup> See Mr 9:17.

Introduction xix

ciously calls itself Christian. Although it inevitably includes the possibility of heresy and apostasy, what cannot be denied is the emergence of a new consensus fidelium, and the appearance of diverse interpretations of the Christic Event. Our present situation is one in which Christianness has not yet sufficiently distinguished itself from Christianity.

A traditional form of Christianness could be found in the mystical artitude, as well as in a certain Christian esotericism. Because the Christianness of the last century was based on individual piety, it could form part of institutionalized Christianity without any great tension. But the Christianness of the present takes the form a more personal and political commitment, and therefore presents a challenge to Christianity. Here as elsewhere, wisdom will consist in transforming destructive tensions into creative polarities.

In short, Christianness is distinguished from Christianity in the same way that Christianity is distinguished from Christendom. In reality, the situation is fluid; every period is one of transition, but some moments are more markedly defined than others. These are kairological moments.

Christianness should not be described only in terms of a negative relationship with Christianity. The three moments are mutually correlated and cannot be completely separated, even though they must be distinguished.

There is also a theological reason for this. Many religions have sacred Scriptures with legal consequences. In the two purely monotheistic religions springing from Abraham, law is part of revelation itself (Torah, Qur'an). This does not occur in the Christic event: Christians have no law that is specifically theirs. To Christians for many centuries, "the Bible" meant only the Old Testament; the New Testament was not considered sacred Scripture. The Sacred was not a book but a Person, not a doctrine contained in a text but an experience encountered in a sacrament. It is also significant to observe that the Christian tradition has no proper name for the Supreme Being. "God" in fact is a common name, the one by which Jesus called His Father. All this suggests the possibility of a Christianness different from Christendom and Christianity.

Undoubtedly, mystics living in Christendom have nearly always shown due respect for the juridical structures, but without clinging to them. The Christic solution lies neither in subversion nor in marginalization.

The example of Jesus Christ is enlightening. He is someone who denounces, protests, even transgresses, but He is not a deserter, nor a traitor. Although Peter had learned to obey God rather than men  $(Ac\ 6:19-20)$ , as a loyal Jew, He did not want to abolish circumcision, but He accepted correction from his companions and the Holv Spirit  $(Ac\ 15:1ft)$ .

In fact, if we look back in history, we will find a good number of Christians who lived the moment of Christianness after passing through, but not rejecting, both Christendom and Christianity. In addition to many simple yet profound believers, one might recall Tertullian, Origen, Joachim de Flores, Dante, Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Joan of Arc, Girolamo Savonarola, John of the Cross, Giambattista Vico,

XX CHRISTIANITY

Kant, and Hegel; in our own time, Teilhard de Chardin, Padre Pio, Thomas Merton, and Abhişiktānanda might well be mentioned.

One way of expressing this triple structure of the Christ-consciousness could be consider different approaches to the famous passage of Luke's Gospel (17:21): "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." The first approach towards this would understand "the kingdom" as a reality anong us; the kingdom is on earth and has political connotations. The second attitude underlines the same Greek article, entors, and understands that the kingdom is between us in such a way that the community or cultural aspect has paramount importance. Finally, the third artitude is inclined to interpret the kingdom as being within us, accentuating the dimension of interiority. Something similar might be said of the word "righteousness"; it could refer principally either to a political symbol, a doctrinal concept, or an interior reality. As we already mentioned, the New Testament word dikaiosymē actually means justice as well as righteousness.

The sociological implications of these distinctions are important. Without doubthere is an identity crisis today for Christians all over the world. Although there are "restorationist" movements that try to go back to a modernized Christianity and theological tendencies struggling for a reformed Christianity, a growing number of responsible people are striving to articulate a genuinely Christian confession of faith without being totally conditioned by the historic weight of the past or the doctrinal constrictions of the tradition. What they are attempting is not so much a privatization of Christian identity as an embodiment of their identity, which is more the fruit of inner experience than of historical and doctrinal inertia. Aware that the world is undergoing a mutation, they are trying to live this change deep within themselves—at the religious level of their consciousness.

In simpler terms, a growing number of our contemporaries want to be religious, believers, and also Christian, but without the "contaminations" they feel have been added to these words. They aspire to rediscover roots in order to grow in a soil that has not been spoiled by either the compost of ancient times, the grafts of the Middle Ages, the pesticides of the modern age, or the radiation of postmodernity.

This struggle for renewal is innate in the human being, and has always been, but in our time it is acquiring historic, even cosmic proportions. Christianness is a new but also an ancient form of Christic existence. It was known from the beginning to many mystics and contemplatives but was then unable to take a sociological form—that is, the ecclesial configuration that is now becoming visible. It presupposes a state of awareness and life that may foster a twofold liberation. This means, first, independence of a fixed and determined political order, which until recently was regarded as indispensable for the practice of "Christian values" (Christendom). It is also a liberation from identifying being Christian with the acceptance of a determined series of doctrines (Christianity).

This new Christic self-understanding does not find itself linked to any determined political order or with a fixed intellectual framework. It belongs to the mystical sphere, to the field of experience. Christianness is neither a new political Introduction xxi

form (a new Christendom) nor a new intellectual creed (a new Christianity). It is something prior to both.

I referred earlier to pluralism and Christian (and human) maturity: they go orgether. Although to give a home to Christianness there is need of Christendoms and Christianities—that is, political institutions and doctrinal systems; pluralism is essential. People need community, which in turn needs a living organism—that is, institutions that, like the Sabbath, serve the human person. <sup>7</sup> People also need doctrinal formulations and systems of thought capable of expressing what is deepest in the human being, without however claiming to be absolute or to exhaust the mystery of reality.

In addition, Christianness and mystical experience need to be relativized in two senses. All mystical experience, which transcends the limits of the ineffable and of "pure darkness," must integrate the social and doctrinal dimensions represented by Christendom and Christianity, Second, no human beings, whether as individuals or collectively (humanity), can claim to be the absolute subject of mystical experience. Anyway, I insist on saying that in the modern world only the mystics will survive. The rest will be crushed by the "system" if they rebel, or will suffocate within the system if they seek refuge in 10.

The fact of Christ is not just a historical event; it is also a mystic reality, a revelation of "what it has been from the beginning." This is not necessarily to defend the idea of an exclusive revelation nor a single, absolute way of thinking or seeing reality.

To summarize, Christianness takes seriously the problem of going beyond the Torah (the Law), and does not wish to fall into the temptation of Christendom by replacing the Old Testament with a New Alliance. As a more concrete example, baptism is not a substitute for circumcision. Following Hiroshima, Auschwitz, Cambodia, and the various Gulags over the ages, we can say that the God of history, assuming that He ever reigned, has resigned. If in doubt, ask the slaves, the oppressed, and the vanouished of all the ages.

We can say that the experience of Christian maturity is threefold. It is the meeting with Christ in the center of one's self, in the center of the human community, and in the center of reality. In Christic language, the human task consists in the necessary "con-centration" to bring all three to form a threefold concentric sphere, without reducing them to only one.

Christian faith, then, does not arise propter tuam loquelam (because of your word), as was said to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:42), nor by authority, and far less by testimony, but by experience.

Christianness arises as a new hope. But hope does not belong to the future: it belongs to the invisible.

<sup>7</sup> See Mt 12:8.

<sup>8</sup> In 1:1.

xxii Christianity

The second tome of volume III, Christianity, includes, again in chronological order, other writings that lead up to the full maturity of the author, illustrating the progress of the spiritual path and the testimony of faith that finds full expression in Christophany: The Fullness of Man, a book that has been republished several times in various different languages. The title Christophany refers primarily to a form of religious worship, Christiania, which concentrates on the direct experience of the Christie mystery.

As an appendix to the book, we have included a series of extracts from letters where the bishop of Varanasi (India), Rev. Patrick D'Souza, with whom the author carried on a constant correspondence from 1968 onwards. These letters bear witness to Panikkar's preistly commitment in the context of his personal, sacramental, and institutional relations with the head of the diocese to which he remained attached until the end of his life.

## 



# Trisangam: The Iordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges

The Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness<sup>1</sup>

Does one need to be spiritually a Semite or intellectually a Westerner in order to be a Christian?

In this chapter, I would like to offer a synthesis of what I have been doing and asying for nearly a half century about the issue of being a Christian nowadays. My experiences and encounters in this field have been too many to be listed here; besides, I will omit the strictly theological problems and just give a general philosophical description of the current Christian condition and, at the same time, specify more concretely the loci of wisdom

The aim is therefore to offer a contribution to nowadays Christianity in its openness to religious pluralism, although while keeping faithful to one's own tradition. It is about the possibility of keeping faithful to a tradition by preserving it from both absolutism and the danger of being exhausted. The question absolutely needs to be addressed; otherwise, any tradition—not only the Christian one—runs the risk of being watered down into a generic monoculture.

#### The Dilemma

Nowadays, humankind is facing a mutation before which the theological reflection can no longer proceed undeterred with its usual categories. Problems have changed; the basic questions need rethinking. This is what has prompted me to call nor for a Vatican III but for a Council of Jerusalem II.<sup>2</sup> For this, we need a certain vision of the state of the world and a corresponding inner-Christian perspective. I limit myself here to the latter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "The Jordan, The Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward Pluralistic Theology* of Religions, ed. J. Hick and P. F. Knitter (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis Books, 1987), 89–116.

4 Christianity

The history of the Christian tradition in its relation to other religions could be symbolized by the three sacred rivers in the title. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, the Hâ Yârden, the Nahr al-Urdunn. The waters of the Jordan cannot be dried away from the body of Christ, therefore not even from the Christians. Christian tradition has an indelibly Jewish origin. Jesus, the apostles, and the evangelists were all Jews. Without a certain Jewish spirituality, the Gospels are incomprehensible. By "spirituality," in this context, I mean a set of basic attitudes prior to their manifestation in theories, or their unfolding in praxits. So we face a question: Can there be a single universal spirituality—that is, a basic human artitude that is both universal and concrete? Does a Jewish-based spirituality offer such a possibility? Is the Jordan the river, as the Egyprains called the Nile?

Such theoretical questions have to be considered in light of the twenty centuries of Christian history equally marked by the waters of another sacred river, the Tiber. Peter and Paul died on its shores, and starting from there they still live in history. Without Rome, Christianity is incomprehensible, even in its anti-Roman aspects. The Mediterranean is the Christian sea, the mare nostrum, "our sea." Present-day Christianity is a more or less harmoniously blended complex of Jewish heritage with Helleno-Roman-Gothico-Western elements. My point here is that we should neither overlook nor absolutize this fact. Christianity is the religion of these two rivers, and we cannot do without them. But the time has come to wonder: "Must it remain so?"

If spiritually Christianity cannot dispense with the Jordan, intellectually it would collapse without its connection with the Tiber, which I take as the symbol of the mentality of the West, however broad and multifaceted this mentality may be.

The question today is whether these two rivers delimit the Christian theological boundaries definitively, or whether one should cross another Rubicon, this time not to defeat Pompeius but to reach peacefully the Ganges.

The question is twofold: Must Christians recognize that they cannot conquer the world—and should not, since they represent only one phylum in the history of religions—but could they, nonetheless, claim the universality to themselves, by saying that they are the only true religious body? Or, is there something specifically universal in the Christian "fact," and, in this case, is Christ a universal symbol?

In the research started by this twofold question, I will use the river Ganges (Ganga) as a symbol, because it seems a fitting one to me: the Ganges in fact has many source, including an invisible one; it disappears in a delta of innumerable beds, and has seen many religions born on its banks. Yes, what looks so fascinating in the Mā Gangā—my private events aside—tit his multiform origin, its unique mouth, and bowe all, its secret heavenly source. In Illahābād (Allahābād), an ancient city with

<sup>3</sup> Mr 3:13: Mk 1:9.

<sup>4</sup> We should remember that the expression "Body of Christ" traditionally meant the Christian people and only later the Eucharist. See F. Holböck, Der eucharistische und der mystische Leib Christ (Rome, 1941), and H. de Lubac, Corpus mysticum (Paris: Aubier, 1944) and Meditation sur l'Eglise (Paris: Aubier, 1954).

a Muslim name (also known as Prayāga), not only do the waters of the Jamunā and of the Gangā flow, but also the waters of the invisible, divine Sarasvatī, which is, at the same time, a source and the goddess of wisdom. This has been testified for millennia by endless crowds in the Kunbb-Mela, the pilgrimage taking place every twelve years according to an astrological and astronomical computation.

Yet by no means should the Gangā-metaphor imply any Aryan (Indo-Germanic) Gangā, the motherly river Ganges, is taken here as the symbol not just for Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and the other religions whose origin is in India, but for all other traditions of Euqaisa, Africa, and Oceania, which embody completely different forms both of spirituality and of mentality.<sup>5</sup>

Standard Christian theology does not make much sense to people rooted in such mentalities, with their own specific features. Not only biblical contents, but most Christian presuppositions and ways of thinking are foreign, if not simply bewildering, to the non-Abrahamic traditions. I must insist on this. Although hardly 10 percent of the world speaks fluent English (and much less than that any other European language), and although Christians are a minority on the planet, "first world" people are prone to assume that what they think represents a universal pattern. A number of cultures are caught in such a universalizing syndrome.

So, we have two possible answers, both Tegitimate. Which answer we favor is more than just an individual's religious decision. Which answer the Christian Body as a whole will favor is a political decision of immense historical consequences. Reality is not just given once and for all. The future of religions depends also on how the different traditions understand themselves and what kind of decisions are taken. Christianity is also what Christians make—of will make—of it. Politics and religion must be distinguished, but they cannot be totally separated.

The first response will say that Christians should not claim universality. They should let the rivers of the world flow peacefully without pumping Christian waters into them or diverting their beds to the Dead Sea or the Mediterranean. They should not cross another Rubicon and inundate every country in the world. Christianity is here considered as one religion among many, and Jesus, ultimately, the Savior only of Christians. Therefore, the relationship with other religions will have to be dealt with as an interreligious problem, like international affairs among sovereign states. In this case Christianity preserves its identity by differentiation: it is unique because it is different, and this difference should be preserved. Tolerance, mutual respect, and good neighborliness are not at stake here. At stake is only the claim to universality of a certain Christian tradition.

See, as an example, Hajime Nakamura, Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See R. Panikkar, Le Mystère du culte dans l'Hindouisme et le Christianisme (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 37ff. (original ed.: Kulmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum [Freiburg-München: Alber, 1964]; now in volume VII of this Opera Omnia).

6 Christianity

According to this first answer, Christians should acknowledge the other traditions, each in its own right. The rivers should preserve their separate identities, and so should religions. The waters of the Gangā or of the Huanghe or of the Nahr an Nil (Nile)—this first answer will say—contain too many salts (or pollution, if you want) and are too far away (philosophically, theologically, humanly) to be able to mix with the Christian rivers without producing major chemical and physical transformations. It is better, then, to keep them separate.

The second is, probably, still the most common answer, although often in a secularized and weakened form. It says that the claim to universality is inherent in Christianity, because Christianity without universality would be a contradiction in terms. Christianity is seen here as a privileged phylum, called upon to unify the world, to "convert" the other cultural and religious streams into a Christian Amazona watering the entire planet in the process of which, of course, Christianity itself will have to change into a still more universal religion. With what right—this second answer argues—should we stop the growth of this Christian dynamism? Is it not the temptation of every revolutionary movement, once its leaders achieve power, to suffocate any further evolution? Is Christianity safe from such a temptation? Until now, Christians have absorbed syncretistically the "good things" of the Mediterranean religions: Why cannot they do something similar with other religions?

The dilemma is this: many Christians will feel that they are betraying their deepest beliefs if they give up the conviction that Christianity is meant to be universal. On the other hand, an increasing number of Christians are becoming maybe dimly but painfully aware that the claim to universality is an imperialistic remnant of times that should be past, and that most followers of other religions feel this claim as a threat—and an insult—to their beliefs.

The present study tries to take a bold step toward the solution of this dilemma by showing that the rivers of the Earth do not actually meet each other, not even in the oceans, nor do they need to meet in order to be truly life-giving rivers. Rivers do not meet, not even in the seas, but "they" do meet: in the sky. They meet in the clouds after undergoing a transformation into vapor, which eventually will pour down again into the valleys of Earth to feed the rivers once again. Religions do not grow together, certainly not as organized religions. They meet once transformed into vapor, once metamorphosized into Spirit, which then is poured down in innumerable tongues.<sup>7</sup> The rivers of the Earth are fed by clouds from above, as well as by terrestrial and subterranean sources, after another transformation, that of snow and tice into water. The trute reservoir of religions lies not only in the doctrial waters of theology; it lies also in the foggy masses (i.e., revelation) of the divine clouds, in the immanent ice and snow from the glaciers, and snow-laden mountains of the saints (inspiration).

My contention will be that the Christic principle is neither a particular event nor universal religion. It is rather the center of Reality as seen by the Christian tradition. By oursuing the metaphor I will try to show that no religious tradition has a monopoly on the living waters of the rivers (salvation), and that we should not water down the tenets of any authentic religion in order to reach religious concord.\* Elsewhere? I have developed the pars pro toto effect inherent in this problematic. My metaphor does not stand for the transcendent unity of all religions in an unqualified way. It goes in this direction, but I do not mean to confuse the actual rivers with chemically pure water. Each water is different, as is each religion: each river carries its proper salts and micro-organisms. Nor should we forget that the waters undergo a transformation (of death and resurrection: water, snow, and again water), which alone allows them to go on ferrilizing the earth.

Religions are not static constructs. Therefore, no religion should fear to let its water evaporate, when the climate becomes unbearably hor. The clouds will restore the waters when the heat of polemics and waves subside. Put another way: Not only is each water unique, but also every river contributes its shape, taste, and beauty to the religious world. This concerns not only some specific field but the entire world in its ultimate destiny. The meanders, ghātis, ports, bathing spots, quiet ponds, quick cascades, wavy and stormy waters belong also to the religious phenomenon. Whatever the "essence" of religion may be, living and actual religions are not essences but concrete, powerful, and dangerous existences. Religious rivers are much more than chemical H.O.

This is  $\hat{w}$ hy my method cannot be purely deductive. It has to be also empirical and historical. For this reason, I will try, on the one hand, to show the historical stages of Christian self-understanding and, on the other, to venture a theological interpretation of those stages.

#### The Five Eras of Christian History

By affirming the present-day recognition that theological understanding is a function of temporal, contextual, and many other parameters, we can understand why Christians have not always interpreted the basic fact of Christianity in the same way. The Christian self-understanding throughout history can be summed up in five historical periods, although the features of each of them are still present in the following eras. For this reason, I call them not chronological but kairological\*omemens of Christian history.

 Witnessing represents the prevalent Christian self-consciousness of the first centuries. The early Christians did not imagine that they formed a new religion.
 Rather, they witnessed to those living words heard at the Jordan<sup>11</sup> and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ. They witnessed to a fact that transformed their lives and,

<sup>8</sup> The last stanza of the Rg-veda (X.191.4) is a hymn to religious concord.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> R. Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony: A Universal Theory of Religion or a Cosmic Confidence in Reality?" in *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 118–53.

From the Greek word kairos, meaningful time—not only chronos, time going by.

<sup>11</sup> See Mt 3:11-17 and parallel texts.

8 Christianity

although soon interpreted in different ways, remained a kind of transhistorical event. They were nor living exclusively in history: eschatology was an ever-present factor. They could fearlessly face death. They were "martyrs" (martyres), that is, witnesses to an event. Fidelity was paramount. This conviction was dominant roughly until the fall of Rome under Alaric in 410, or the death of St. Augustine in 430. The true Christian was then the martyr.

- 2. Conversion represents the next moment. The world was becoming "Christian." but the climate was still "heathen." Slowly, Christians did establish themselves as a societal and even political reality. Yet they were aware that the "Constantinization" of Christianity had its pitfalls, and true Christians had to distinguish themselves from the "world." In this situation, one was a genuine Christian not so much because one adhered to an official religion, but because one underwent a change of heart. Conversio morum (a change of lifestyle) was the monastic slogan. The Christian may tamper with the emerging political order or be allured by Christian social power, but the real criterion is style of life, purity of heart. To be a Christian means to be converted to Christ, and true Christians follow the monastic calling. By now, however, Christianity has developed not only a specific set of doctrines but also rules of political allegiances. The Christian understanding is that now Christians form a religion, even a state, the emerging Empire. This religion is not yet inimical to other religions, especially those far away, but conversion slowly acquires political connotations. Entire peoples are converted, but carry with them the basic attitudes of their respective ways of life. This was the fate of a great part or the peoples of Europe. This state of affairs lasted until the Middle Ages, although it suffered a convulsion in the clash with Islam. This clash elicits a new attitude.
- 3. Crusade characterizes the Christian self-understanding during this new period, extending from the eighth century until well past the fall of Constantinople in 1453, probably until the defeat of the Turkish fleet at Lepanto in 1571. Christendom is firmly established. There are struggles and inner tensions among Christian sovereigns, but nothing cements Christian life more than the external threat from Islam. It was almost a collective obsession. Spain falls quickly under Muslim dominion after the battle of Guadalete in 711, and the South of France is also "invaded." Charles Martel is hailed as the savior of (Christian) Europe, but Jerusalem and the Holy Places "fall" under Muslim domination. Vienna is besieged. The Christian Empire has to reassert itself, the danger is felt everywhere. Often Jews are scapegoats of Christian frustrations. The Christian has now to be a soldier, a crusader, a "militant" - a word that will be used until our times. The superiors of the new religious movements are no longer called fathers, abbots, or mothers, but generals—and the movements become "orders." Militia Christi (army of Christ) represents the main attitude of this period, either in the most literal sense of becoming a crusader, or in the most lofty interpretation of becoming a Jesuit, or some other type of Christian "soldier."

Protestantism presents a similar feature: Christianity is a demanding enterprise; it requires courage, faith, decision. You have to be a Christian chevalier, you need to

be a hero, you have the sacred dury of conquering or reconquering for Christ the life within and the world without. One should not compromise with the world. Faith alone suffices. Islam, which is felt as a threat (partly providential, as a warning not to become lukewarm), becomes the image of all other religions.

It is in this era that Christianity begins to develop the idea of being the only true religion, and therefore all the others are false. To be sure, vera religio (true religion) is a consecrated phrase, but the meaning shifts from true religiousness to the only true and saving institutionalized religion. This attitude lasts for centuries. But, at a certain moment, something new happens in Christendom—that is, in the Sacrum Romanum Imperium Germanicum. A new continent is "discovered" in 1492. This changes the scene: Christendom as a world order slowly collapses, and Christianity as a religion emerges.

4. Mission then becomes the dominant feature, until the end of the modern age. The thrust to conquer is irresistible. But the religious justification of the conquest of America cannot be that of a crusade: Amerindians could neither be called a threat, like the Muslims, nor were they accusing Christians of anything. The Conquista could be justified only if they were to be made Christians. Salamanca is boiling with theological discussions. Bartolomé de las Casas defends the Indios. Francisco de Vitoria tries his best, but the triumphant ideology is that Christians have the duty—better, the mission—to proclaim the gospel and to convert, and thus to save the Amerindians. This ideology spreads steadily. The true Christian is a missionary. The meaning of the word, again, extends from literally going to preach to the "infidels" to mystically offering oneself for their salvation, giving an example to the world. Therese de Lisieux, secluded in her Carmelite convent, sees—and fulfills—her life as a missionary. Mission theology, 12

Nevertheless, in contact with other peoples of the world, Christians discover that these new religions contain treasures of spiritual values, and a theological reflection sets in. The names of Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili recall this approach, but many such efforts were stifled because Christian institutions found them threatening to the dynamism of the times—that is, to the political expansion of the European states. Since the kings declared themselves Christian, they could not allow any theological interpretations that might undermine their political expansion. The dispute over the "Chinese rites" is a clear example of this. In short, the mission toward the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> It is meaningful that the book by Paul Knitter, No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), heen published in the American Society of Missiology Series (no. 7). In the "Preface to the Series," W. J. Danker, the chairman of the committee, states, "Always the focus will be on Christian mission." And he specifies, "By 'mission' in this context is meant a cross-cultural passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence" (xi). The title given to the collection of essays stemming from the SEDOS sentians on "The Future of Mission" (which gathered 102 persons from forty-five Catholic religious families and six continents), in Rome 1981 was Mission in Dialogue, ed. M. Moueand and J. R. Lang (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982).

10 Christianity

entire world is a duty for Christianity. Christians still nowadays pay and pray for the missions. Even international war operations are called "missions" up to our own times, and the name is universally accepted.

But two world wars, 100 million war deaths in the twentieth century, and the independence of some 160 new states mark the end of this period. Many Christians realize that they can no longer "missionize" other peoples. We enter into the contemporary age.

5. Dialogue is the new catchword after the dismantling of the colonial political order. There is a trend now roward "indigenization," inculturation, greater respect for other religions, and attempts at a new interpretation of Christian faith. Many Christians no longer want to conquer, not even to convert: they want to serve and to learn; they offer themselves as sincere participants in an open dialogue—although with understandable mistrust on the part of their partners, as anybody conversant with past history can well understand. Christians are beginning to say that dialogue is not a new strategy but an open process of mutual enrichment and knowledge. Christendom has little prospect, Christianity is in crisis, but the Christ-symbol remains effective. Christianness emerges on the sociological plane.

To be sure, the Christian somehow retains all five traits. There is something of a wimess in all Christians, and they will feel uneasy if they are not somewhat better than non-Christians (conversion). If they do not have the courage to confess their faith (a militant, a crusader), and do not sense the burden and responsibility of caring for the whole world (mission). Now discovering that they are not alone, Christians open up to dialogue. We are just at the beginning of a new spiral of the interaction between Christians and the peoples of other belief systems.

#### The Lessons of History

We should situate our reflections within the respective historical contexts.

The first period is still nurtured by the waters of the Jordan. The Old Covenant is felt to be paramount. Spiritually, Christians are Semites. The three following periods are nourished by the waters of the Tiber. Christians are intellectually. European, still linked primarily to Mediterranean cultures. From this standpoint, across the Atlantic there are only colonies in the historical sense of the word, despite the fact that, after half a millennium of more or less independent existence, the Americas present features of their own.

Only the fifth attitude is no longer content to simply export Mediterranean culture. It aspires to bathe together with other believers, in the waters of the Ganges and all the other rivers of the world. Christians discover that those rivers are real rivers that do not belong to them. It is a new sociological situation, despite some remarkable exceptions in the past.

These exceptions do merit some brief mention, for the contemporary attitude of dialogue is a kairological moment not totally absent in other periods. We can refer to Minutius Felix, the disputes of Barcelona and Toledo, Ramon Lull, Bernard of Clairvaux, Nicholas of Cusa, and, in more recent times, Brahmabandhav Upad-

hyaya and John Wu, among many others. All these figures attest that the felt need for dialogue is not brand-new. On a more popular level, an existential exchange has always existed where populations of different religious allegiances live side by side. In Kerala, for instance, animists, Hindūs, Christians, and Muslims have lived for centuries in a relatively positive symbiosis.

We may now draw some lessons from this historical survey.

The first lesson history makes us aware of is that all our disquisitions are dependent on a temporal factor, that is, on historical circumstances. Were it not for the fact of the political decolonization of the world, we would not be speaking the way we are today. Dialogue has not sprung out of pure speculation; it has been almost forced upon Christians by circumstances. Praxis conditions theory. Yet it is also wisdom to make a virtue out of necessity.

The second lesson should be one of liberation-from both a narrow, unidimensional supernaturalism and a sheer dialectical materialism. The change in Christian attitudes is neither solely the fruit of a providential God guiding a particular people, nor is it merely the result of cynical calculations on the part of institutional churches hoping to remain in power and continue dominating purses and consciences. Both factors-and still others-may be at work. Although historical circumstances impel us toward certain attitudes, this does not preclude the possibility that these circumstances are the fruit of still other forces acting in history; nor is a divine factor necessarily excluded, though it is certainly not a deus ex machina. The Spirit of God, to use traditional language, should be distinguished but not separated from the spirit of the times. History explains the how, not the why. In other words, history shows the triumph of neither the best (the Anointed One, chosen by God) nor the most cunning ("blessed" by power games). In the view of the Bhagavad-gitä, Dharmaksetra, and Kuruksetra belong to each other (by the way, Sarasvati, that third, invisible source of Ganges whose geographic existence is denied, flows across Kurukşetra); or, to speak with the Gospel, wheat and the tares grow together.

The third lesson invites us to the relativization of all our endeavors, including our theological and intellectual achievements. Our critical attitude toward ideologies of the past suggests that we ourselves are not an exception, and not essentially better off. We are also situated within a limited and ultimately provisional framework, Thor the time being," which is our being in time. We are as much a passing phase as our ancestors were. If we have to beware of ethno-centrism, we should equally guard against chrono-centrism.

The fourth lesson stresses the creativity and freedom of authentic theologizing. Theology does not merely repeat past doctrines or only draw implicit consequences from them. It also creates something new. Its decisions and insights can be momentous; they can strike a new direction that is not a mere "development" of an already existing dogma. There are mutations and there is freedom in the real world. Theology is not only exegesis, it is also praxis; not simply a matter of drawing conclusions. In other words, the history of Christian self-understanding is not a logical unfolding

12 Christianity

of premises; it is the fruit of a series of factors, many of which are free movements of the human and divine spirit. To sum up: The criterion for the next step is not a logical continuation of the previous ones. It presupposes them, but is not necessarily contained in them. Life is more than logical unfolding—even more than evolution.

History also teaches us the proper way to approach our topic. In order not to lengthen this chapter unduly, I shall only enunciate some methodological principles.

#### Methodological Reflections

- a. A Christian reflection on Christian self-understanding has to take three factors into consideration:
  - The original sources of this very self-understanding.
  - · The interpretation of such sources by tradition.
  - The personal experience of, and new reflection upon, these sources and tradition.

The art of theology consists of blending these three factors into a convincing harmony.

- A theological interpretation of the Christian fact today needs to be concerned about the following:
  - Not to commit apostasy, that is, not to sever itself from the very tradition it wants to continue.
  - Not to dilute the tradition into an amorphous common denominator, not even for the sake of tolerance or the ecumenical spirit.
  - Not to neglect a thorough knowledge of other traditions. Christian selfunderstanding has to be open to other religious experiences, and belief forms (and systems); to be willing to listen to them, to learn from them, and even to incorporate anything that appears to enrich or deepen Christian interpretation; and to be ready for a mutual transformation. This interreligious fertilization may produce a new awareness and even, eventually, a new form of religious consciousness or religion.
  - c. The method has to be dialogical<sup>13</sup> and it is to be applied
  - Among religions themselves; in this case, Christianity and the other religions of the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Dialogical Dialogue," in The World's Religious Traditions: Current Perspectives in Religious Studies—Essays in Honour of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, ed. Frank Whaling (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984), 61–72.

- Within the very heart of one's own religion; in our case, among the different sorts of Christian understandings and theologies.
- Within the inner recesses of the theologians themselves, or the persons engaged in such an enterprise. It is an intimate religious exercise.

I will not elaborate on any of these points, for I hope that this chapter itself is an example of such a methodology.

#### The Three Geo-Theological Moments

The Christian fact has been understood so far as essentially historical, as it can also be seen in the analyses of the five kairological moments above. But it is also, and properly, transhistorical. The Christian event is not something of the past only or of the future only: it belongs also to the order of the heart, of the personal life of the believer. I has a sui generic sontemporancity and, in a way, transcends time and space without abolishing the spatiotemporal framework. It is theological. It prompts reflection on the given data in the light beaconed by its own tradition, as well as in the light beaconed by its own tradition, as well as in the light from other lighthouses—although everything is always filtered through our own optical glasses. The three geo-theological moments are also kairological, they are intertvined: each is present in the other. And yet the respective moments appear with major force at precise points in the temporal manifestation of Christic consciousness.

History and tradition are *laci theologici* (sources of theological activity). Any contemporary theological reflection that ignores the new context is methodologically flawed. Neither dogma nor Christian self-understanding are a-historical and a-geographical facts. Geography as much as history is a human as well as a religious category.

If the five facets of Christian self-understanding described above have developed along historical lines, the following three theological moments follow a religious-geographical pattern. If the Christian phenomenon of the hird century is different from that of the twentieth century, there is a similar difference between the Christian experience along the Tiber and along the Ganges. My fluvial metaphor is more than a geographical nicety; it is also a theological category. Whether Christianity is universal or not, the Christian interpretation of life in an African desert is different from one in a Scandinavian city. We have been much more sensitive to history than to geography.

We should be fully aware that the geography of Christianity cannot be reduced to the Jordan of Palestine, the Tiber of Italy, or the Ganges of India. Not only are the fauna and flora on the shores of the many rivers of the world different, but also humans and their religiousness are different. Geo-theological coordinates are not Cartesian and neutral geometrical parameters; they implinge on the very nature of humans and their beliefs. The "geography of religions" is still an almost unexplored discipline. Furthermore, geography and history are intertwined.

The Tiber, for instance, is not only the river of Rome. Rome is also Byzantium, and for centuries Moscow was the third Rome. Also, the Italian city itself encompasses three Romes: that of the Caesars (Christian or not), that of the popes (with or without temporal power), and that of the people. Yet I will consider the Tiber to be representative of the second period of Christian geography.

What follows is, necessarily, only a sketchy overview.

# The Jordan: Water, Faith, Event, Religiosity, Upwardness, Exclusivism

"Jesus is the Christ": this is the shortest formulation of Christian belief. Although the meaning of "Christ" is polysemous, the origins of this formulation were very closely linked to the Jewish understanding of the Messiah, despite the reservations Jesus himself had with this title. In the grammatically synonymous titles that are used, there is a shift of meaning: Anointed One, Messiah, Christos, Christus, and of course lesus Christ.

This Christian self-understanding is intimately linked, in both continuity and confrontation, with the Jewish Bible. Circumcision is abolished, thus creating a break with Judaism. But it is "replaced" by the baptism of water—which originally was, of course, Jordan water. Those waters baptized Jesus, the son of Mary, the Son of Man. They are holy waters because the Spirit of God broods upon them.\(^1\) Water is the symbol for initiation: it cleaness, runs, is in polarity with fire, comes from sources and rivers, but also from high above and deep below the earth, bringing death and resurrection. But there is only one Jordan. Not everybody is initiated. Exclusivism is lurking here, although all water—we will be told later—is Jordan water.

The Christian is the man of faith. This faith is centered on the person of Jesus. Theological discussions, therefore, will have to educidate who this Jesus is. The central point, however, is not so much His individual nature but the reality of His event, especially the resurrection. This event is first of all a historical fact in the life of Jesus, the young Jewish rabbi who was condemned by the legal, religious, and political authorities of the times. We are embedded in history, and especially in the personal history of Jesus, and so fidelity to His person is central. The teachings of this young rabbi, even though most of His sayings might have been said before, are fascinating: His example has an irresistible attraction.

Christians, in spite of the warning of the angels at the Ascension, <sup>15</sup> still look up to heaven. They have a 'religious' attitude that permeates their lives, a particular religiosity, not a religion. They look upward to the risen Christ. Eschatological hopes are predominant. His resurrection will reveal and effect our resurrection.

It is a privilege to come under the influence, spell, grace of Jesus. It is something special, which confers a dignity; a source of joy, it is also a duty entailing responsibility.

<sup>14</sup> See Gn 1:2; Mt 3:16; and parallel texts.

<sup>15</sup> Ac 1:10.

The Jordan, to continue with my fluvial metaphor, has a particular power, as the Jewish Scriptures knew. "Are nor Abana and Pharpas, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel." Can I not wash in them and be clean?" exclaimed Naaman, the commander of the king of Aran's army, to Elisha, the prophet of Israel. "I no ther words, uniqueness, privilege, and even exclusiveness do not create any insurmountable problem in a hierarchical world. "Christians are few, and even fewer are the saved." In a hierarchical context, there is nothing repellent about a certain exclusivism.

This first moment corresponds to the first historical period described above, that of witnessing.

That explains why, from the standpoint of "Jordan," the central theological problems hinge on the identity of Jesus Christ, developing at the Christological and Tinizarian level

## The Tiber:

Fire, Belief, Institution, Religion, Introversion, Inclusivism

But is the Jordan the only sacred river? Is not baptism also of fire? The fire burns what is dried and it spreads afar. It purifies, but also destroys. Christian identity today cannot be reduced to the experience of the first generations, overlooking the cultural and religious constructions that twenty centuries of Christian life have produced. We are dealing here with the second, third, and fourth periods mentioned above: conversion, crustade, and mission, spanning well over fifteen centuries of Christian history.

The Christian is committed to a certain worldview, which is expressed in a set of beliefs. To be a Christian does not mean just to profess fidelity to Christ; it also entails adherence to Christian society, be it called church or beliefs. Splits and schisms, once well established, also develop their own orthodoxies. Christianity becomes an institution. The sense of belonging together becomes highly institutionalized. The ideal is Christendom, the Christian Empire, Christian in When it begins to collapse, around the sixteenth century, it is replaced more and more by Christianity as religion.

The Jordan is a geographical and mystical river; its waters are baptismal waters. The Tiber is a historical and political river; its waters symbolize the waters of the Thames, the Seine, the Parana, and the Potomae. Its waters carry a theology, a well-structured vision of the world, even if broad and flexible. They are the waters of Christian civilization, past and present. Christendom and Christianity as its successors are not just private affairs. The Christian waters flow everywhere; they irrigate all the fields of a civilization that claims to encompass the entire world. A variety of contemporary names: John Paul II, President Reagan, Queen Elizabeth, General Pinochet, philosophers Maritain and Gilson, theologians Barth and Lonergan, and historians Toynbee and Heer... could be added here. All these persons endorse a belief in the superiority of Christianity. This belief does not prevent one from acknowledging the greatness of others and the failings of Christians; yet, as will

<sup>16 2</sup> Kgs 5:12.

be argued, such acknowledgments are according to the values of Christianity and under the authority of Christ.

Christianity has become so powerful and universal, so convinced of its mission, that it does not feel the need to look outside except to learn and to improve itself. Inwardness is one of its features, be it mystical, religious, or political. Within Christian revelation, doctrine, praxis, and way of life, according to this perspective, one finds all that is needed for a full human life as well as for judging other religions and cultures. This is the kind of introversion I am referring to: in ourselves we find the whole truth. Theology is turned inward. We want to find in ourselves, in our own tradition or revelation, the answers to all theological issues. We may speak about the others, we may revere them and integrate them into our system, but it is still ue who perform the task. Here is one example: When for the first time in Church history an Ecumenical Council, Vatican II, not only recognized that other religions have a right to exist but even praised them, as happened in the document Nostra Aetate, no need was felt to invite representatives of these religions to speak for themselves. Carholic experts felt sufficiently confident to speak on behalf of others. The Tibe was enough.

A tight theological case is made to defend a certain kind of Christian inclusivism. The Christian religion—in this opinion—represents the culmination of religious evolution; it stands for universal values and claims a sort of universality. In brief, Christianity does not necessarily despise others, but it certainly considers itself superior.

Anima naturaliter Christiana, "anonymous Christians," "fulfillment theology," servants of humankind," the realm of nature and grace," or in more secularized ways, "democracy," "global civilization," "world governance," "one world market," "universal human rights," one natural science valid everywhere, with accompanying technology . . . are all expressions of the same syndrome. All the rivers carry the same water, but ultimately it is our water, even if the canoes going up or down the stream do not know it.

To be sure, there are many Christian institutions, churches, and theologies. Often they struggle among themselves for power, or for a better understanding of their theological issues (internal or ecumenical), or for better ways of dealing with other religions of the world. Within such diversity, we detect the same kind flanguage. We may call it the Western logo. Christians become irritated at such a qualification, for the logos, they say, is universal (although it can only be "our" logos). If not the Tiber itself, the waters of the Tiber are everywhere. That is why we need fire and invarantess.

Efforts at greater openness within this inclusivistic attitude are praiseworthy: there is the notion of an invisible Christianity, a cosmic Christ, a universal pneumatic church, a God who makes sense also for Buddhists, and a law that does not exclude nomos, dharma, karman, or li. The ideal is a "universal theology of religion" or, in more scientific terms, a Unified Field Theory. This Tiber is indeed longer than the Mississippi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For a representative sample of the contemporary North American debate, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

As long as Christianity remains invisible, Christ unknown, the Church spiritual, God ineffiable, the law unwritten, and theology undone, there is no quarrel. Homo loquens tamen (Man, however, is a speaking being), and we cannot speak "language" as such, nor practice religion as such. We have to speak a particular language and practice a particular religion. Christian universality then becomes suspect and collapses. Unless . . .

Unless it is felt that the Christian phylum is so privileged that it absorbs all the others and becomes the only Amazonas for the entire world. This is the case in the many new forms of "revivalism" and fundamentalism. In all such phenomena, preoccupation with self-identity is central.

It is also clear that the main theological problems here will hinge on who Christians are and what their destiny means: problems of ecclesiology, grace, salvation, relationship to other religions, and, in general, orthodoxy.

#### The Ganges: Earth, Confidence, Religiousness, Dimension, Outwardness, Pluralism

We face now the challenge of a "theology" for a postcolonial era. It corresponds to the above-mentioned fifth artitude of dialogue. A dialogical theology posits what it is talking about only when the subject matter—and obviously the language—has been found in common or created in the dialogue itself. The very agenda of the dialogue should be worked out in the dialogue itself in other words, Gangotri is only one of the sources of the Ganges, and the delta is no longer a river, nor even "Indian" territory. The sources of our Ganges are the snow of the mountains and the clouds of the sky, none of them are actually water.

The symbol here is earth, that is, secularity (saeculum), or the kingdom of justice here on earth, which entails the readiness to collaborate with all others, even if we disagree with them. There is no planetarian consciousness, but there is a special awareness of the other(s) and a certain inclination to welcome without suffocating them—that is, to accept without comprehending. We trust: We have a higher confidence in our common destiny than the certainty (security) placed on our logos. Christian identity begins to appear neither as defending a certain culture nor as belonging to an institutionalized religion, but as living a personal religiousness, that is, a sort of religious attitude that constitutes a dimension of Man, one factor of the humanum, one aspect of the divine.

Christians are no longer wortied only about themselves, but are also open to others, and to the world at large: outwardness. This moment is characteristically outward-obund, not in order to go out and conquer but to be in relationship. It is an artitude that sees oneself in relation to others, and others in relation to oneself. I do not call it openness, so as to keep the balance with the other two moments.

The Christian theology of the second moment tended to emphasize the newness of the Christian message and to defend identity by difference, thus affirming that

love of one's neighbor, the doctrines of trinity, grace, and so forth, were all specific and unique contributions of Christian revelation. Whatever the particular cases may be, the third attitude will feel more comfortable if it discovers that all those doctrines and sayings are humanity's common good, and that Christianity simply incarnates the primordial and original traditions of humankind.

What I am saying is this: neither exclusivism nor inclusivism represents the proper attitude of this third moment. I am talking about *pluralism*.

Before elaborating the positive aspects of this new moment, which I call *Christi- anness*, I should review some of its negative features (which will lead us, like Moses,
up to the borders of the Promised Land). I am speaking of the possible incommensurability of ultimate worldviews.

I have often argued that, properly speaking, comparative philosophy is not possible, because the necessary standpoint from which the comparison is to be made already belongs to a definite philosophical view. "Something similar can be said about comparative religion." Unless we assume that reason (ultimately "our" understanding of reason) is the neutral, universal, and sufficient criterion for evaluating religions, we cannot assume at the outset that all religious traditions can be justly and truly measured with the same metron. Each religious tradition, as a relatively complete system of self-understanding, segregates its own parameters. A fruitful dialogue has to agree on the parameters to be used in the dialogue itself, otherwise there is only talking at cross-purposes. Simply stated: What do we mean by the very words we use? The talk about meaning of words precedes, conditions, and also constitutes dialogue.

The consequence of this is that religious traditions may be incommensurable; they may not have a common measure that can adequately evaluate them. And in point of fact, they are mutually irreducible, until some agreement has been reached or established. A realistic assessment of the present state of affairs is that religions, and even theologies, often consider themselves mutually incompatible.

And we do not necessarily need to resolve our intellectual frustration by postulating an Intellect for which all—absolutely all—is intelligible. This hypothesis only saks the ultimate question. It pretends to answer the why of Being, and in so doing it makes Being subservient to the why, to logos, to consciousness. We may logically

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The title of the wonderful book by Karl Prümm exemplifies what I am trying to say: Christentum als Neuheitserlebnis (Christianity as an experience of novelty [Freiburg: Herder, 1939]).

Yee R. Panikkar, "Religious Pluralism: The Metaphysical Challenge," in Religious Pluralism, ed. L. S. Rouner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 97–115; now in this Opera Omnia, volume VI, part 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Aporias in the Comparative Philosophy of Religion," Man and World 13 (1980): 357–83, now in volume II of this Open Omnias and "What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" in Interpreting across Boundaries, ed. G. I. Larson and E. Deutsch (Princeton, I): Princeton University Press, 1988), 116–36, now in volume X of this Open Omnia.

say that all that an infinite or supreme intellect encompasses is intelligible. There are no limits to an infinite intelligence: all is intelligible to it. But unless we identify Being with Consciousness, we cannot logically demonstrate that there could not be any unknown Being.

One might object that, if such an infinite intelligence could not know all, it would not be infinite. We might respond that an infinite intelligence is infinite qua intelligence, but does not need to be infinite qua Being, unless we already assume that Being and intelligence ultimately coalesce—which is precisely what is under discussion. This simply implies that there may be facets of reality opaque to the light of the intellect. I shall return to this point when dealing with the notion of piuralism.

If the problems of the two previous moments were Christological-Trinitarian and ecclesiological-socretiological, the theological problems here will hinge on the issues of humankind and how Christians can help solve them. This does not mean that these problems are merely political or economic, or only a matter of justice. They are also anthropological, for Man has gained a peculiar self-understanding. They are also cosmological, that is, concerning the vision of the world and of history.

It is over against this historical and geo-theological background that we can situate the specific challenge and problems of a pluralistic Christian self-understanding for our times.

If the spirituality of the Jordan strictly belongs to Christianity, and that of the Tiber to Christendom, the Ganges here stands as a symbol for Christianness—although all similes should be taken with a Pascalian espiri de finese (rather than de géométrie). <sup>21</sup> From time immemorial, the Ganges is a symbol, not of political or intellectual power (like Christendom and Christianity), but of personal experience, and experience is of paramount importance in Christianness (Christ-experience). The Ganges, except is some mountain tracts, is not a dramatic river. Risen out of Himalaya, it then flows quietly, since it lies almost at sea level for more than a thousand kilometres. Your sins will be all forgiven if you die faithfully in "her" arms. The Ganges has no power, but is endowed with a tremendous suthority, if She" can cleans her believers from sins. In the beginning, Ganges was heaven, and it poured itself onto earth through Sivas hair, thus doing no harm to any living being; it still flows in the underground world, just at its mouth by Island Sagar. This experience of the three realms is essential to Christianness. As we already mentioned, anyway, Mā Gangā means any other river whose waters had been considered "non-Christian" so far.

These three mental artitudes, together, symbolize the complex Christian phenomenon of our times. Furthermore, the increasing awareness of Christianness offers a platform from which the dilemma of exclusivism or inclusivism may be solved in favor of a healthy pluralism of religions that in no way dilutes the unique contribution of each human tradition.

<sup>21</sup> On the distinction between Christendom, Christianity, and Christianness, see the Introduction to this volume.

#### Concrete and Universal versus Particular and General

We need to distinguish, as I have elaborated elsewhere, between concreteness and particularity, universality and generality. The converte can be universal, not so the particular. There are things that are concrete (my faith, my parents, my home, ...) precisely because they symbolize the universal (faith, parenthood, home country, ...). The universal is universal because it re-presents the entire field, and not because it detracts from concreteness, as the general does. The universal is centered; it is turned toward its own center: uni-versus, turned toward the One. It is embodied in the concrete. The Christian actitude is and should be concrete. It is limited, and yet it re-presents the Whole. Like the very mystery of Incarnation, in the concreteness of one Man dwells the fullness of the divinity. I have called this phenomenon "the pars pro toto effect" (part for the whole). We see the whole through our window; we see, and even are, the totum in parte (whole in the part). The concrete is the pars pro toto. The particular is the pars in toto (part in the whole). We may "sacrifice" the particular for the sake of the whole. We cannot do that with the concrete.

The modern geometrical mentality interprets the meaning of universal as the sum total of an elementary geometrical area constituted by contiguous parts. Of course, according to this view, one part, one sector of a circle cannot be the whole; but this is not the traditional way of understanding universality. In Christian history, St. Augustine still literally translates "catholic," kath bolon, by secundum totum, "according to the whole"—that is, as the religiousness that for us is complete inasmuch as it provides all we need for our fullness and liberation. It is only with the geographical expansion of late and collapsing Christendom that "Christianity" as "catholic" religion came to mean the spread of one single religion all over the earth.

But there is still more. "Universal" is not necessarily a quantitative notion. A drop of water may be equal to another drop of water, but it is not the second drop. They are numerically and facutually different. They may contain exactly the same mass of water, but one drop is not the other, in spite of the fact that both are water, and that, if it were not for the surface tension making them two drops in space and time, we could not distinguish them. Nevertheless, one individual mass of water is not the other. And yet, if we abstract the quantity of water, both are just water, water indivisible (from within, as it were). In other words, the water of the drop—not the drop of water—is both concrete and universal: it is both this water and, simply, water as such. 3 Christian Scholastics used to speak of the specular character of the universe, in the sense that each being, especially each human being—image and likeness of God—reflects, mirrors, and represents the entire reality.

<sup>22</sup> See Col 2:9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> See R. Panikkar, "L'eau et la mort. Réflexion interculturelle sur une métaphore" in Filosofia e religione di fronte alla morte, ed. M. Oliverti (Padova: CEDAM, 1981), 481–502. A revised version now appears in volume IX, part 1 of this Opera Omnia.

These distinctions bear noteworthy Christological implications. Christ, as the second Adam, stands for all humanity, and in a certain sense, for the whole cosmos, says Christian tradition following Paul. Minutis minuendis (on a smaller but matching scale), every person represents and is the symbol of all reality. The mechanistic worldview, prevalent in our times, is a great obstacle to reenacting this liberating experience. The problem of the universality of Christ and of Christian salvation would practically be solved if approached in the light of a more traditional cosmology. It is not a matter of comparing, say, Christ with Buddha, Krsna, or whomever. Nor is there the question of separated constituencies. If Christian theology is carried on within the perspectives of Christendom or Christianity, such problems may arise. But Christian theology today cannot ignore Christianness. In this perspective, the problem is not one of jurisdiction. Doctrines may differ, theologies may quarrel, institutionalized religions may discuss their spheres of influence, but the existential problem of human salvation does not concern who has the passport to heaven, or which consulate or embassy has the right to issue such documentation. What we have to change is the very perspective of the question.

The universality of Christ represents, in this context, His transparency, His perfection. We are here within another cosmology, which dissolves the problem of singularity and universality. \*\*We should not confuse the individuality of Christ with our individuation of Him; His identity is not His (our) individuation. \*\*S Christ is unique, as any loved child is unique for his or her parents eminenter (at a higher level). I may add.

Perhaps an example will help to clarify all this. The Ptolemaic conception of the solar system was exceedingly complicated. One of the advantages of the Copernican revolution was that the new heliocentric system was much simpler. In one stroke, an enormous amount of calculating became superfluous. I am suggesting something similar. As long as we entertain a mechanocentric conception and a geometrical notion of reality, a number of problems are exceedingly complicated and can hardly find any solution. Either Christians "stick" to their "Christ" and become exclusivistic, or they give up their claims, dilute their beliefs, and become—at best—inclusivistic. Both horns of the dilemma are equally unacceptable.

The parallel Copernican revolution consists in shifting the center from linear history to a theanthropocosmic vision, a kind of Trinitarian representation, not of the Godhead alone, but of reality. The center is neither the Earth (our particular religion) nor the Sun (God, transcendence, the Absolute, . . . ). Rather, each solar system has its own center, and every galaxy turns reciprocally around the other There is no absolute center. Reality itself is concentric insamuch as each being

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 111–12 (in memory of Raymond Klibansky) (1975): 141–65.

<sup>25</sup> See R. Panikkar essay "Salvation in Christ" in part 1 of this volume.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See the whole volume VIII of the Opera Omnia.

22 CHRISTIANITY

(each tradition) is the center of the universe—of its universe, to begin with. The theanthropocosmic insight (which sees the unity of the divine-human-cosmic) suggests a sort of Trinitarian dynamism in which all is implied in all (each person represents the community, and each tradition reflects, corrects, complements, and challenges the other).

#### Conclusions

A Christian reflection on religious pluralism and its implications for Christian self-consciousness may include the following points in its agenda:

- 1. We should neither ignore nor neglect the past; we should respect traditional self-understandings, but should also submit them to appropriate (new) interpretations.
- We should not be satisfied with merely exceptical approaches, according
  to which the contents consistent with tradition count as absolute; but Christian
  self-consciousness does not merely consists in hermeneutics. We should allow for a
  possibly new Christian awareness.
- 3. The greatest change in Christian self-understanding touches both the text and the context. The text is being enlarged by the incorporation of the other sacred texts that until now have been excluded. In other words, the reflection on the "Christian economy of salvation" cannot ignore the existence—and the challenge—of the world religions. The traditional context was symbolized by the Tiber. The new context is that of the Ganges, that is, not the context of Western history, but a meaning inherent in the present-day situation. Obviously, the Ganges does not stand here for an exclusively Hindū river (the Jordan of Hinduism, as it were), but as a symbol of the wider world.
- 4. The new context is not just a new territory added to the old one, nor is it the same territory seen in a new light. The new connext entails both new elements, which were not there before, and a transformation of the old context. It is a new connection that embraces, corrects, and supersedes the old, but keeps a certain continuity with it. Nevertheless, this new context is equally limited and concrete. It should not be identified with a sort of universal pattern, which would amount to an antipluralistic homogenization of reality.
- 5. We should not identify the Christic fact, which expresses itself in *Christianness*, with *Christianity* as a religion, and much less with *Christianity* as a civilization.
- 6. There is not just one single view of Christ, however broadly it may be conceived. No single representation can embrace the whole reality of Christ.
- 7. Religions are incommensurable with one another, despite some possible common traits. Each religion is unique with the uniqueness of every real being. But we should not confuse the "autopsy" of a religion with its living existence. This very incommensurability, like that of the radius with the circumference, does not preclude the fact that each religion may be a dimension of the other, in a kind of Trinitarian perithérēsis or circumínsessio. Each one represents the whole of the human experience in a concrete way.

- 8. Each religion expresses one concrete form of humanness. This does not exclude a possible divine influence on the *humanum*, nor a possible religious decadence.
- 9. When religions encounter each other, they can mutually enrich each other, and also destroy each other.

  1. The state of the state o
- 10. If Christians are able to extract the Christian "essence" from their religion (Christianity) as a principle, this principle can be experienced as a dimension at least potentially present in any human being, as long as no absolute interpretation is given. This could equally be said of a similar principle in other traditions (Buddhism, for instance).
- 11. Christians may find in this Christic principle the point of union, understanding, and love with all humankind and with the whole cosmos, so that in this concreteness they find the most radical human, cosmic, and divine communion with reality—without denying the role of other possible homeomorphic equivalents.
- 12. The Christian starting point is the kenotic experience of Christ (His experience of being "emptyfied" through the Incarnation), which entails acceptance of, and openness to, the Spirit

As a conclusion, we can say that an awareness of the overall context of our world today leads to the recognition of a mutation in Christian self-understanding. This mutation is due to

- (a) Historical changes: the passage from Christendom to Christianity, and finally to the attitude of Christians expressing Christianness in themselves.
- (b) Philosophical discernment between the concrete/particular and the universal/general—that is, the overcoming of the quantitative patterns of thinking.
- (c) Cosmological revolution: the worldview in which Christianity thrived can no longer oppose any critical revision.
- (d) Theological recognition of the right and values of other religions, and thus a healthy pluralism.

All of this comes from—and, at the same time, asks for—a deep, conscious insight into the Christian basic fact or principle. Thanks to this awareness, the social and religious forms of history are transcended; we are slowly accepting the need for a new Christian consciousness, tied neither to Christian (Western) civilization nor to Christian (institutionalized) religion. New communities may appear, even in raditionally non-Christian countries, and some may even shun the name "Christian" because the "Christian" label may be understood as a mere continuation of the past.

It is not a question of hiding the features of Christian civilization, or of minimizing the importance of organized religion. It is just about finding the center of

<sup>2</sup>º See R. Panikkar, "La religione del futuro o la cisi del concetto di religione. La religiosità umana," Civiltà delle macchine 27, nos. 4/6 (1979): 166–71. where point one out of twee reads, "The problem of the future of religion is not the same as the problem of the religion of the future," and note eleven reads, "The future of religion consists, first of all, in a personal religiousness, not in one religious confession," See volume II. Opera Omnia.

personal spiritual life, and discovering the Kingdom of heaven, the pearl, the reality of the Mystical Body, the communion with the divine, the interior, historical, and at the same time cosmic and transtemporal Christ. There have been times when it was dangerous to be a Christian, others in which it was advantageous. These two features are still very real today, but I am underscoring a third one: it is difficult to be a Christian. It is difficult to the courage to face not only the profane world, but also the institutionalized church.

Christianness stands for experience of the life of Christ within ourselves; insight into a communion, without confusion, with all Reality; an experience that "I and the Father are One"; a that labels do not play a decisive role, that security is less important than what many think, and that reflection also is a secondary source of knowledge (although a wonderful tool). It is with hesitation that I use the phrase "mystical experience," but perhaps there is no better way of saying it. Not without a certain bias I chose the mystical Ganges as a symbol. Was not this what Christ said? "Waters of eternal life." <sup>24</sup> —from any river. One has only to drink them.

#### The Cosmotheandric Christ

I end these reflections with a personal note, which may shed a different light on the preceding analyses. I will try to state my interpretation of Christ in a theanthro-pocosmic vision. I believe this interpretation follows the methodological principles of this essay, but in no way do I wish to suggest that it is normative, or necessarily representative of Christian theology.

The Mystery that was at the beginning and will be at the end, the Alpha and Omega through which all has come into being, the Light that enlightens every creature, the Word that is in every authentic word, the Reality that is totally material, completely human, and simply divine, which is at work everywhere and unreachably present; the place where Reality is ever-present, the meeting point at the crossroads of reality, where all realms of existence meet; the kingdom that does not come with fanfare and about which one should not believe that it is here or there, and in which we do not know when we perform a good or an evil deed, and yet is "there," that which we are—and will be—and which we were; that Symbol of all reality not only as it was or is, but as it still will freely be, also through our synergy . . . is what I believe to be the Christ.

If someone says that this symbol is too broad and universal, I will reply that, if the incrumcision of the body has been superseded, why should we not overcome the circumcision of the mind?

And I insist that, with such a view of Christ, I am not escaping the scandal of the Incarnation and the process of redemption. I am not ignoring these historical facts. I simply do not worship history as a god, nor do I limit Reality—not even

<sup>28</sup> In 10:30.

<sup>29</sup> Jn 4:14.

human reality—to history, nor history to the Abrahamic phylum. Just as traditional theology speaks of a *creatio continua*, we could by analogy envisage a continuous Incarnation, not only in the flesh, but also in the acts and events of all creatures. Every being is a *Christophany*.



# THE COSMIC CHRIST

## A Neglected Aspect of Modern Catholicism1

The Christian sense of existence, in the opinion of both optimists and pessimists, of believers and those who believe themselves to be nonbelievers, appears to be going through a crisis. We have lost something of our sense of Christian identity and what it means to be Christian—perhaps because we are too centered on ourselves and were afraid of losing value. The problem is more cultural than anything else. There is an essential relationship between culture and religion, which can be defined in two phrasess religion gives culture its content, culture gives religion its language. And perhaps it is culture itself that is going through a crisis.

Culture offers a language to men of every era and every cultural space; it makes it easier for us to use a given language rather than just an idiom, to adopt those concrete ways of seeing the world that we call "language." Culture, which is more than just understanding chemistry, playing the piano, or using a computer, gives a certain meaning to the collective existence of a given human group. And it is precisely this ultimate meaning that defines a religion.

The culture of our present-day world, the world in the last thirty years or so, has changed radically. Philosophers would tells us that this was already foreseeable, that for hundreds of years we held within us the expectation of a great cultural change; undoubtedly, in the pass few centuries—let us call them the centuries of Galileo. Coperincius. Enlightemmen, or simply, modernity—culture has changed considerably. What has happened to Christian language? It has not changed much. And this is my theme: a neglected aspect of Christian consciousness, which is, precisely, cosmic consciousness.

We have read the Gospels from a very legitimate perspective, which today, however, leads many to a degree of pessimism and a large part of the new generations to total skepticism. It is an interpretation that is either too conservative or too bound by the "journalistic" culture.

Let us take a few passages from the Gospels that, in one way or another, describe Christian self-consciousness. Jesus begins His public life, preparing

¹ Original text: "El Crist Còsmic: un aspecte negligit del catolicisme modern," Serra d'Or 340 (1988): 32–33; in Italian in La nuova inmoenza: Inmoenza cosciente (Sotto il Monte-Bergamo: Servitium, 2003; rev. version 2005). Translated into English by Geraldine Clarkson.

to preach the good news of mankind. What does He do first? He goes into the wilderness to be with the wild animals (Mk 1:13). He went into the desert; He did not go to talk with anyone, He did not see anyone. He was with the animals. This indicates that animals appear to have something to do with the Gospels, but we have now excluded them, and this "just us" syndrome may be fatal for the entire human race. Just us."

What did Christ do once He rose from the dead? The first thing He did was to descend into the underworld, the nether world, the world of hell. What did He go there to do? Ask the theologians, who have racked their brains trying to find explanation. It seems, however, that He must have done something. St. Matthew tells us that Christ was in the heart of the earth (Mt 12:40). Therefore the earth has a heart. And we all know that the word credo has to do with the heart; even the Sankrit word for "faith" deaddh. Iterally wears to give a play the heart.

The New Testament is full of this cosmic conception of the meaning of Christ. He is the Pansoratör (Rev 1:8). Even though these are references to God, tradition applies them to Christ. St. Paul (Rom 16:25–26) and St. Peter (Ac 3:20) both speak of the figure of Christ not only as one who was born from the womb of Mary but as He who was present at the beginning of fit he world (Col. 1:16).

The first thing that sprung from the hand of the Creator was Christ (Col 1:18). And the last is again Christ, who is seen both as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Rev 1:8). He is the firstborn of creation and of mankind (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15:18: Col 1:5: Rev 1:5). besides being the only son (In 1:14).

All this brings us to a Christian conception that is not centered on Man, and neither on history. Christ was there before the world was made (2 Cor 5.1ff.); He is the mystery that was hidden for centuries and now reveals himself for us in the figure of Christ (Rom 16:25, 26): "Before Abraham was, 1 am" (Jn 8:58). St. Augustine himself speaks spontaneously, en passant, of "that religious feeling of Man that has existed since Adam and that now we call Christianity." If Christianity has only existed for twenty centuries, and today the Christian culture today is receding continually, we can understand the emerging of a certain amount of pressimism, but we should also regard this process as a sort of purification of the sectarian sense of being Christian. We ourselves make our lives unhappy, because we fail to read deeply enough the same writings of the Christian tradition. And this brings us back to the "just us" syndrome. I am not content, just as a large part of the Christian tradition was not content, with belonging to a religious sect that has existed for only two thousand years on a small part of the planet and whose history is far from edifying.

The end of the world is, nevertheless, described as the recapitulation of all things in Christ (Ep 1:10), the returning of the whole universe to its starting point (Ac 3:21). The end is God, all in all (1 Cor 15:28). For in Him we live, and move, and have our being (Ac 17:28).

Let us remember the most ancient and traditional self-understanding of Christians: that they did not set up any special religion. During the first three centuries

no Christian would have said they belonged "to the Christian religion"—religion is something quite different. Religion is testament, berit.

Until the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, the Bible was only the Old Testament. The idea of a New Testament is a relatively modern invention that appeared as a way to make of Christianity a new berit, a second testament, a covenant, a religio (which is the Latin translation of the Hebrew berit). The whole primitive Christian effort, however, was geared to breaking the covenant, the testament of YHWH with His people—the circumcision. This is the primordial sacrament of all Judaism. And the small group of Jews broke free of the testament for reasons of praxis and not theory, because they all wanted to be Jews, and good Jews, but realized, through praxis, that the Holy Spirit (which apparently blows where and how it chooses) did things with the uncircumcised that were previously the monopoly of the Jews (Acts 15:8). And if the Holy Spirit follows other paths, as the minority of Paul and Barnabas tell, then obviously the Jews do not have the monopoly on salvation, since the uncircumcised can also receive the Holy Spirit. And it was then that the first Council of Jerusalem decided to break with what had been the most fundamental element of Israel's entire twenty centuries of history: the primordial sacrament of the covenant of YHWH with His people, the circumcision, symbolizing that which unites the divine and the human by making flesh and blood the tangible symbol of God's concern for mankind. On the basis of this covenant all Judaism stands or falls.

This is the Jewish Testament. Subsequently, the Christians dared to say, "No Torah, no law" (Rom 3:20 and passiny). Then, little by little, since it is difficult to be free, the temptation of the "fleshpots of Egypt" (the human temptation par excellence) led Christians to accept a new testament, and circumcision was replaced by baptism.

We want the security of having everything explained to us or done for us, or of being told what to do. We are afraid of our freedom, our decisions, and our responsibility. This is why we desire a new testament. There is no new testament, however. If we want one, the old one is still fairly good. Up until the first fifteen centuries there was practically no talk of a New Testament. There was no new covenant, no new religion, no other testament, no berit. What the first Christians (who were all good lews) wanted was to make Christianity into a kind of reformed lewish secr. slightly improved in certain things, remembering that Jesus had said, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Mt 5:17). There were many writings to support those who were in favor of continuity and against the idea of separation. Yet the advocates of separation won; this was the revolution of the Council of Jerusalem. Then, gradually, the Christians became dissatisfied with being seed, salt, and light (the seed dies. salt does not aspire to turn everything to salt, and light illuminates but is invisible). They also wanted to be a religion, at least as powerful as Judaism-a religion like the others, which has its own members and followers, its own laws, its own covenant, its own testament. This involved a complete reinterpretation of all the writings of St. Paul, who, from the beginning to the end, says that there is no testament, no law, and no Torah, but that the kingdom of the Spirit is near and where the Spirit is, there is freedom. This, perhaps, is the great crisis that Christianity is facing today: a crisis

regarding its identity as a religion. I express this by saying that it is the "passover," the passage, the new *pesach* from Christianity to *Christianness*, just as the Renaissance sought to pass over from Christendom to Christianity.

I did not intend to take this direction, however. I wanted to give a broad outline of a Christian concept that today is almost essential to the survival of the Christian meaning itself.

YHWH made a covenant with the Jewish people, but He also made others. He with Moah (Gn 9), and the pact He made with Noah was not a pact with mankind; it was a pact with the whole earth and all the animals. I am not referring to ecology, which, in fact, merely means to tame the earth, perhaps improving it a little, but continuing, nevertheless, to consider ourselves the lords and masters of the earth, to our own advantage and benefit. It is still logos that rules. The pact YHWH made with Noah is a pact with the whole earth, with all the animals and all things and not only with men, with Noah and his family. The rainbow is a symbol of this. It is the whole cosmos glorifying itself, the whole cosmos participating in this adventure, of which we are also a part, though certainly not the protagonists. We would do well here to put anthropocentrism aside. We have been too fearful of pantheism, which is an error in defect and not in excess.

Those who are at all familiar with the Roman Breviary, which for many centuries represented what was known as the official prayer of the church, will no doubt have noticed that most of the hymns begin with or refer to a cosmic theme:

and so on. The hymns to the Mother of God are equally cosmic:

```
Stella maris...
Regina caeli...
O gloriosa virginum,
sublimis inter sidera;
pulchra ut luna...
```

THE COSMIC CHRIST 31

In short, the trina rerum machina caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum is constantly present and associated with redemption and human life:

Tu dux ad astra, et semita... Exultet orbis gaudiis, caelum resultet laudibus.

There was silence in heaven when Michael fought with the dragon or the divine

Quem terra, pontus, sidera Colunt, adorant, praedicant...

There is no fear in beginning a hymn to Mary by associating not only incarnation with the cosmos but claiming that the earth, sea and stars glorify, worship and preach Him who holds up the trinam machinam of the entire universe.

In Greek partistics, Man is the priest of the whole cosmos, and "priest" means mediator, not intermediary. An intermediary takes a commission from each of the two parties and establishes a relationship between them so they might marry, engage in business, draw up an agreement, or whatever. A mediator is all for one party and all for the other. The intermediary is a moral figure, the mediator a cosmic figure who participates in both worlds. To believe that we have only a sociological function, that the church is not the "cosmos of the cosmos" that the Greek Fathers claimed, that it is not "the Church since Abel" as the Latin Fathers repeated, and that we are merely a sect (however good, open, and large it may be) is to forget the ancient Christian tradition and fall into what forty years ago I defined as microdoxia: the reduction of Christian doxac.

There are some extremely interesting texts on the resurrection of the flesh, a dogma that has also been largely forgotten and that is not something postponed until later, until the next life. A very zealous Benedictine monk was once explaining to a Zen master what the Christian resurrection is. The Zen master listened, and at the end of the Benedictine's explanation said, "So now show me your resurrection? Then I will understand it more than all those abstract, fantastic concepts you give me about later or who knows when... Show me your resurrection." As long as to cannot show it, all talk about resurrection is merely abstract academic discussion, or a bad joke. Resurrection is a cosmic dogma. It concerns the body, space, time, cosmot. This is why we understand it so little. We have lost its connection with the Eucharist, with the beginning of anakephalaiösis, the summing up of all things in Christ (Ep 1:10). The Eucharist is the bread that gives life to the cosmos (see In 648–52, Greek text). It is the pharmakon athanasias, the "medicine of immortality,"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the twofold sense of "doctrine" and "glory."

as St. Ignatius of Antioch says.<sup>3</sup> And I could cite a great many other testimonies, as I have enjoyed doing elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

All perfection, as that giant of Christian spirituality, Isaac of Nineveh, tells us, consists in "a heart full of mercy (compassion, pity, elebinon) towards all created nature." Then he asks, "And what is a merciful heart?" and answers, "The burning of the heart for the whole creation—man, fowls and beasts, demons and all the world."

It is the whole of creation, says St. Paul (Rom 8:19ff.), that groans to be delivered. In the song of Christian perfection, the Sermon on the Mount, Christ tells us to "Look at the birds, behold the lilies," as a model for the human being. When He talks about men He tells us that the children come first, and when He refers to the moral order He says that the prostitutes and publicans will go before."

Peter speaks of living stones for the building of the kingdom (1 Pet 2:5). There is a Pāl Buddhist text that gives the impression that the two authors copied each other. Both, in fact, ralk about living stones making up the building. "Let the stones be stones," Christ said to the demon who tempted Him to create a new religion with a miracle. He did not wish for the stones to be turned into bread. It would show a lack of respect toward the stone to want to turn it into bread. "Let the stones be stones." "Man does not live by bread alone"—but also by stones, by living stones. "The rock was Christ," St. Paul says in an important text that links again to the Jewish Bible (1 Co 10:4). And "on this rock I will build my church," another fundamental text says (Mt 16:18). Here rocks are more important than keys.

Cosmic consciousness, I repeat, is essential in understanding everything the Gospel says. It is so essential that the perpetuation or continuation of the historic Christ does not occur in the form of devotional and sociological collective worship, but of bread and wine. This must be significant. The human element integrates with the cosmic element to unite with the divine.

What is prayer? The Greek Fathers, who are, at least chronologically, closes to the Christian self-comprehension of the earliest days, say that the physikë theoria, hat is, the contemplation of the cosmos or physical things, is the entering into communion with and knowing how to decipher the first and most fundamental of all the books. There are three books (and this is stated repeatedly even after 5t. Thomas). There are books written in letters, first on scrolls or tablets, and now on computers. There are those that are revealed (and in the beginning we were never told where they started and where they ended. Our ancestors never doubted the inspiration of the Sibyl, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Etruscans, and many others. We only have to read Pico della Mirandola in the mid-fifteenth century to realize this). But the first and most important of all the books we must know how to read, select, legre, is the book of Nature.

<sup>3</sup> Epist. ad Eph., XX.2.

See R. Panikkar, Humanismo y Cruz (Madrid, 1963), 335-52, now in this Opera Omnia, volume III, section 1, part 1.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 21:31.

THE COSMIC CHRIST 33

Those who cannot read this book are illiterate, no matter how many other books they are able to decipher or how many Biblia they know. And this book of Nature is a book that appears to be closed to many. We are reminded of the passage about the wise and the babes (Mt 11:25). True wisdom consists in knowing how to read these three books "bound in a single book by love," to paraphrase Dante. We might also refer to the statement by St. Augustine that says, "Liber sit tibi pagina divina, ut hace audias; liber tibi sit orbis terrarum, ut bace videas. In istis codicibus non ea legum this qui literan noverum, in toro mundo legar et idiota" (Let he sacred page be your book, so that you may hear these things [books were read our loud]; let the world be your book, so that you may see these things. Only people who know letters can read what is in the books, but even the uneducated can read the book of the world").

There are three statements about God in Christian Scripture. These are very it is not possible to define God. And they are cosmic: God is light(1) In 1:5); God is light(1) In 1:5); God is light(1) In 5:20), and God is lowe(1) In 4:8). There is also another, though I prefer not to include it out of exegetical scruples: God light(1) In 1:22). Fire, light, life ... these are not privileges of Man. Neither is love, in my opinion, a privilege of Man, although we have in some way taken possession of lit, at times even overindulging in it. In any case, all this causes the anthropocentric conception of Man, a narrow vision of the Christian phenomenon, to crumble. We must open up to an experience of which we are a part, certainly, but not the center, nor, ultimately, the only party responsible.

There is another phrase that is continually spoken by Christ and repeated many times by Paul (1 Co 7:32ff.; Ac 4:6, etc.), which is also part of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 6:25): "Do not worry." This is extremely difficult to translate from the Greek, because merimnate (me merimnate) derives from meris, meaning part. Mérimna is Angst, worry; it is seeing things in a fragmentary way. Amerimnia is nonworry in the sense of freedom, confidence, trust. The root (s)mer implies also "to cavil, to think," that is, to worry, "I wish you to be without cares," amerimnous, says Paul. Sine solicitudine, the Vulgata translates. I would go on to interpret the phrase as: do not take yourselves so seriously, even tragically. Overcome this kind of ethnic egocentrism that is not only of the individual but of all the human species, and that, at times, costs us dearly. Do not be alarmed if you lose control over things. Today we are losing control of our lives, fathers are losing control over their children, the pope is losing control over Catholics. . . . Everyone is worried because they have lost control. The novelty of Descartes, one of the philosophers about whom the most has been written, is not the system he created in order to build his philosophy on certainty, but the background of this system. Descartes was shocked by the fact that men had such widely different opinions. The Jesuits of his college said a series of things, but the Franciscans claimed they were all lies and the Dominicans insisted that they should be said differently. . . . Who can I trust if, of the most trustworthy,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos 45.7 (PL 36.518).

34 CHRISTIANITY

my teachers, one says A, another says B, and a third says C? In this case, declares Descartes, we should "wipe the slate clean." I will heed no one. I think, and therefore I am. The important thing is exertitude, certainty. With so many opinions around I cannot trust anyone. I will trust myself. Little by little, I move from the need for certainties, relying on myself, to the security of my tribe, relying on atomic bombs. What is important here is the outrage of the multiplicity of opinions. This is not founded only on cogito ergo sum, but on the idea that "my very being is thought"; Man is a "thinking reed," his contemporary Pascal says. Man has been identified with thinkine. And when thoughers are incompatible. Man wavers.

This is why today we must trust in reality. If we do not regain a new innocence, if we forced to anticipate, consider, and control everything, then it is understandable that we cannot live without worry. Quis austodiet ipos custodes? Who controls everything? And who will control the one who controls, and so on? We demand certainty. And the symptom of certainty is just one step away from the modern state's obsession for security (we cannot sleep peacefully unless we have missiles and weapons and cannons to protect us and keys to lock us in . . .). Certainty, in the epistemological order, means security in the collective order lorder.

Everything that can be read in Christian Scripture points exactly in the opposite direction. Do not worry. Are you not worth more than the lilies of the field. . . ? (Mart. 6:34). Cosmic trust in today! (Mart. 6:34).

So far we have interpreted the evangelical message with the key of a given culture. And this culture was basically historic. It is the culture of the myth of history—the truly real, the horizon of the intelligibility of things, what counts it history, the (siz) historic. We must know other cultures to realize that the historical is only relatively interesting, that there is no reason why Man should live alone in history and no reason why history should be the only horizon in which Man sets things. From this point of view, nature, animals, demons, angels, planets, and beings that have no history, in the strict sense of the word, are also included in reality. And human history then appears to waver a little.

The evangelical message is a new challenge to the Christians of our time—the challenge to go back and reinterpret it in a key that is not contradictory to history but complementary or, perhaps, parallel.

If we could once again cultivate this cosmic conception we would, first of all, find our rightful place, which is not in the center of everything, and second, we would see reality as the divine, cosmic, and human adventure in which we are all called to take part. Then we would gain greater freedom and greater optimism, as well as a deeper joy that would not depend on whether my political party gains consensus or things go according to my plans.

# THE NEW ROLE OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES IN ASIA\*

Euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creaturae.

Mk 16:15

My presentation will be divided into nine points, preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion. This will make the discussion easier.

My words may sound provocative, but, in the end, I am going to make room for "more realistic" accommodations.

But let me briefly express, at the beginning, my mind regarding the important topic you have chosen for the ACUCA this year. It know, of course, that I have the "privilege of not being infallibles," but the topic is so important that I decided to go to the roots of it and touch the specific issue only indirectly. The concrete problem—namely "The role of people of other faiths and traditions as teachers in the Christian universities and colleges"—will be the concern of other papers. I would like to deal with the foundations that may provide the basis for a certain type of answer to our problem. In other words, the particular issue is a special case of the general problem that I will attempt to unravel, namely, "The New Role of Christian Universities in Asia Today." It is a fundamental reflection which, on upprose, will not put forward concrete proposals and practical steps. These will have to be worked out together, in dialogue, and by going to all of your experience: it is not to be up to me to spell them out. I will remain (and I say it not as an apology) in the realm of the general, but also important and vital issues.

<sup>&</sup>quot;The New Role of Christian Universities in Asia," 54 (1990): 561-82. Also in M. Uozumi and M. Kasai, cts., Asian Cultural Studies, Special Issue no. 4 (Tokyo: International Christian University, 1993), 169-85. Opening Lecture at ACUCA (Association of Christian University and Colleges in Asia) held at Assumption University, Thailand, 1989.

It is really with a sense of fear and humility that I accepted this task, because I am fully aware not only of my responsibility but also of our responsibility. We cannot fumble, today, with the situation of the world in which we live.

Let me begin with an explanation of the title I chose.

First: Christian universities and colleges, nor "individual teachers." There will always be occasions for individual witnessing and doing good. We may do good, we may witness to the gospel and walk a way of sanctity wherever we live. This is not the problem here. The assumption that in this college, or anywhere, we may be doing a lot of good, is not my subject matter. I am not speaking of the good that is possibly or certainly done by different individuals in different institutions, be they Christian or non-Christian. The good we do is not in question, although very often—alas!—this answer is given as a justification for something that transcends the task of the individual. My topic is not, I insist, whether we all are doing a good job, or we are witnessing to Christ, or we are taking advantage of this or that situation in order to

Second: the new role, not the old one. In this new role, non-Christian teachers are as essential as the Christian teachers. A modern Christian university is not a church, nor only open to church members. It is a community of people concerned with learning, knowledge, wisdom—higher education, as we call it. A modern Christian university is not a community of Christian believers, as a church is. It is somethiat of a different nature. A college may have all male, all white, all rich, all Christian students. A college is a more or less homogeneous group, and this homogeneity is perfectly legitimate. A university is different, and I would add that it is a contradiction in terms, against the very idea of "university" or make such discriminations.

Let us recall that the university is the only institution in Western history that has lasted for over nine hundred years, overcoming the crises of Europe first, of Western vivilization subsequently, and the present-day situation. As for the future, it is to be seen if the university will tesist the technocratic impact. The unifying force of the university is the mythos, not the logos; it is an ideal, an urge, not a particular content. It implies a deep interest in a formal content, not a material content. Otherwise, the university would be practicing a discrimination, an apartheid, that would be intolerable in something that holds itself to be uni-versity and not uni-formity.

It would not be a university if it put extrinsic limitations on the members of that particular institution, which under this name has withstood the interferences of popes, kings, presidents, tycoons, and politicians of all sorts. It is, for instance, against the very nature of a university to require a particular nationality in order to teach or study in it. This goes against the very essence of what the university stands for. In fact, in most of the universities that keep a certain standard, you may be English, Spanish, Sudanese, or whatever, and be a full member. The governments may impose certain restrictions for practicing medicine or law in their respective countries, but not for studying in the universities of the country—although, of course, it is an indirect way of imposing restrictions. But this is another, and sad, matter.

If you discriminate on the ground of nationality, you are already doing some-

thing against the very nature of the university, as well as if you discriminate on the ground of confessional belief. This does not mean that the university does not have a unifying force, but—in my philosophical language—that unifying factor belongs to the order of mythos and not of logos. A mythos is something unquestioned because we take it for granted. From within, it appears unquestionable, and thus it elicits consensus. The university is based on the free pursuit of knowledge, with no other boundaries than those inherent to knowledge itself, and no other censorship than the critique of fits peers. Today this institution is in crisis, but this is nor my topic here.

Besides other political and cultural factors, the traditional idea of the European university was born out of three principles:

- 1. A dedication of one's life to the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of wisdom.
- A realization of this ideal together with both of colleagues dedicated to a similar quest and disciples eager to learn from the knowledge and experience of the seniors.
- An intellectual freedom, zealously kept (often the students were rectors of the institutions and financed the magistri) against the religious and political powers of the time.

When, in the cultural climate of Christendom, the *mythos* was the Christian respublic or imperium, universities were Christian almost as a tautology. But this is not the situation today. When universities were founded in countries outside Christendom, the name "Christian university" began to be used in a sectatian way.

My thesis would then be that the new role requires Christian universities to cease to be confessionally "Christian," in order to become truly "universities"—playing with words, I would say: truly "catholic." The Christian Scripture tells us that to love one's life is to lose it. Perhaps, to cease to be restrictedly "Christian" would be the way to be authentically Christian. Who strives to be only specifically Christian may cease to be Christian altogether. This is the great challenge to present-day Christianity.

To sum it all up: the phrase "Christian university" began as a redundancy, continued as a sectarian label, and tends to become obsolete today.

What is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian teacher? There may sometimes be more differences among Christian teachers than between them and their non-Christian colleagues. I wonder if the links among people today follow this kind of orthodox party line between Christian and non-Christian denominations, or rather many other allegiances, like political ideals, ecological convictions, cultural activities, and other commitments.

\*

So far for the introduction, but I will now make reference to the providential words of the introductory prayer that we heard. I refer to the Gospel read by the vicar general: Mark 16:15. There could not have been a more appropriate choice.

Anyone dealing with the topic of Christian universities should have these words in their heart: "Walking into the whole cosmos, proclaim (sing, dance) the good news to the entire creation."

I am extremely happy to comment on the reading that introduced our meeting. Because I, for one, would nor like to put any dichotomy between the devotional aspect and the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of our lives. The text says: Walk, step in, simply go as pilgrims, without instruments or aids of any kind. It continues by saying: into the whole cosmos, and we know that cosmos is not a geographical category. Penetrate into the inner fabric of Reality. Then the text goes on: proclaim, that is, sing, dance, manifest, "infect" . . . what? The Good News, namely that the prisons should be open, the hungry fed, the worried people comforted, oppression eliminated, injustice healed, hate overcome. And this to the entire treation, not to humans only.

\*

This "keynote address" would like to be just a prayer asking for the key to open our hearts, in order to convince us that we should take to heart the radical injunction of this Gospel. Otherwise, we are nor loval to our vocation, both Christian and human.

I would like to put some sūtras before you. Sūtras, as principles or aphorisms, can convey a certain understanding if we meditate on them, and put them under scrutiny and discussion.

## An Injunction to Proclaim the Gospel

There is an injunction to proclaim the gospel. The sentence already makes the point. But this injunction is only authentic if it is not felt as a heteronomous imperative, but as an inner urge. That is, as something which I do spontaneously, without setting it as a goal or a purpose. It is not a means for something else, a reward or whatever. The most elementary psychology would tell us that, the moment we want to be witness to something, that witness is suspect. The moment we want to prove something, we may succeed or not, but then the proof is connected with our will; that is not impartial witnessing.

Not without reason it has been written that whenever you have to give witness, "you should not worry beforehand about what you have to say." This is a very difficult thing to accept for the Western spirit, because, as Schelling said in a lapidary phrase, "the will is the primordial being." When something escapes the control of our will, we lose our bearings, we do not have certainty, and we fear that we are nowhere. But we can only witness when we do not wish to; or, as Buddha would put it, the very desire for nirvāṇa makes it impossible to attain it. In fact, Christ is not the object of the kērgyma, He is the subject. Only Christ is the proclaimet, and the proclamation

<sup>1</sup> Mk 13:11: Lk 21:14-15.

does not belong to the individual will, not even to the individual person, but to the divine Spirit enlightening everyone of us. *Kêrygma* is not propaganda.

Furthermore, what is this proclamation about? It proclaims the glad tidings, not Christ. Christ is not the object of kërygma, but "whatever I have cold you, whatever I have cold you." The injunction is to present, proclaim, dance, sing, and specially do what Christ did and said. This is the gladdening news—something we may well learn from His own life, which, however, He does not want us to flaunt. Jesus fled when they tried to proclaim Him as the Messiah, and He also rold us that it was good that He went away, otherwise the Spirit would not come. And these other words of His are also clear. "See, seen non? No double-talk. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." Anything for which you need Mammon is not my business. The injunction to proclaim the gospel does not mean advertising Christ—and control the sales, of course. Only a pure heart can truly witness.

I stressed this point, because what I am about to say in the following sūtras does not imply any watering down of the first sūtra, but just enhancing and purifying it.

#### The Proclamation of the Gospel Linked to One Ideology, One Culture, One Religion

The proclamation of the gospel (first sūtra) has been linked with one ideology: that of the Judeo-Hellenic world, the Roman Empire, Christendom, the West, technocraev, in cumulative succession.

Most Christian dogmas are formulated by means of Greek concepts. I remember nonce relling Pope Paul VI during a private audience, when he asked me what I was doing, that I was wondering if, in order to be a Christian, one had to be intellectually a Greek and spiritually a Semite. Have Christians of other continents to be circumcised in their own minds according to Hellenistic culture, and circumcised in their own hearts according to the Abrahamic tradition? This is the embarrassing question that Asia in the third millennium asks the whole Christian community.

The proclamation of the gosped has been linked to one ideology. We are children of our times, and this link is, in a certain way, unavoidable. We should not be afraid of any ideology, but we are now aware that there is such an immense gamut of opinions—from the Christian Marxists, who say that the only way to be an enlightened Christian is to be a Marxist; to the church in South Africa, according to which the only way to be a "realistie" Christian in that country is to defend apartheid; to the Thomists, Barthians, Democrats, and what not, who will prescribe to us what an intelligent, a radical, or a humane Christian is.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Mt 28:20, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 6:15.

<sup>4</sup> In 16:7.

<sup>5</sup> Mt 5:37.

<sup>6</sup> Mt 6:24.

After all these experiences, we are sufficiently aware that we cannot be tied to one single ideology, although an ideology may be linked, and in each case necessarily linked with the Christian self-understanding. But until now the Christian kerygma was, and still in a great part is, tied to one single prevalent "neta-ideology." It is only with closer world communications and a growing ecumenical awareness that ideological pluralism begins to enter into Christian consciousness. Let me give a delicate but clear example. A dominant Christian ideology of the post-Enlightenment era defends the separation of between religion and politics, as well as the separation of the supernatural and the temporal order. In this sense, Pope John Paul II asked Catholic priests to keep away from political activities. But politics is not only party politics. The best example of the inseparable relationship between religion and politics is john Paul II hinself! He has linked Roman Catholicism with a particular ideology, but, according to him, his own political activity is not "politics" but mere Christianity (or rather, Christendom).

The proclamation of the gospel is also linked to one culture. Until now, this culture is what we roughly call the Western one. To this culture does, by and large, belong the realm of universities all over the world. The immense majority of universities are linked with the Western model of culture. Gurukuls and Buddhist universities are disconnected with the rest of the world, or hardly exist any longer. As university people, we are linked with one particular culture. By and large, in spite of all the efforts being made here and there to recover a pluralistic cultural identity, universities as institutions belong to the modern culture of Western origins and Western archetypes.

A still more difficult issue, and more delicate, is that the proclamation of the gospel has been linked to one religion. Nowhere is it written that proclaiming the liberating news of Christ is the same thing as preaching Christianity. To be sure, Christianity has come into being out of this initial impulse, but Christianity itself has changed and evolved. To preach the gospel today does not necessarily mean to defend the universal papal political power according to the never-revoked pontifical bulls of Boniface VIII. It may well be that, as Christendom yielded to Christianity in the Renaissance, the latter yielde to Christianies in our present times.

Whatever this may be, we acknowledge the legitimacy of religious pluralism, and the fact that the gospel's injunction is an ever-old-and-new challenge for each period.

### Historical Inertia Converting a Crown of Glory into a Crown of Thorns

This third. sitns is almost a corollary to the identification of the Christian strygma with the state of affairs referred to in the previous one. I am not passing any judgment about the past. I am trying to understand the present. And I find here a deplorable example of what I call the inertia of the mind. One of my childish ambitions is to succeed one day in formulating the law of the inertia of the mind, as Newton discovered that of matter. Matter and mind, if there are no outer resistances, both keep on going, even when the initial impulse is no longer there. I think I have almost all the parameters, but this is not my tooic here.

My topic here is to show how historical inertia—which, incidentally, is heavier than that of matter—has converted the crown of glory of Christian institutions of the last centuries into a crown of thorns. In spite of the many faults we find with the Christian colonization of Asia since the expansion of "Christian" Europe, we have to recognize that, in this respect, when hardly anybody took care of the sick, education of the new generations for the incoming changes, awakening the self-consciousness of girls, and so on, many Christian mistionaries did it. Many Christian colleges and universities begun with this impulse of truly promoting education, identified at that time with Christian education (here is the mythos I referred to before). I may even be ready to a accept the idea that they were so successful that the entire population got "awarified," and now it is society itself that takes care of most of such activities.

I am not denying the right of the churches to collaborate with such welfare and justice activities, even putting their resources and experiences into the service of the different nations. But I am stressing that the identification of education with Christian education, and the opinion that the essential role of Christians is to run educational institutions, is no longer tenable. I even venture to say that today such activities begin to have the opposite effects than those originally intended. I have been saying for over a quarter of a century in India that Christian school institutions have had, by and large, the effect of vaccinating their students so as to make them immune against a more complete and genuine Christian conversion.

In more academic terms, I am saying that faith—and what we may call the faith of Christians—is not identifiable with any ideology, culture, and even religion. In front of the scandalous situation of poverty and injustice today, perhaps an enlightened Christian action should give priority to such endeavors, which, as I am still going to say, do not exclude academic participation and involvement. I am only noticing that the old model is crumbling down. Historical inertia is exhausting its momentum.

#### Modern Science and Education Either the Substitute or the Cloak for the Gospel

Due to the same historical inertia, modern education has often found, in the teaching of the liberating tenets of modern science, a substitute for the often ankylosed interpretation of the gospel. The translation we often hear of that verse from Mark's Gospel reads "teaching all nations," which would not even be a proper translation of the parallel passage in Matthew. Of course, by "teaching," the common reader understands anything from business administration to mathematics and history, which is different from dancing, proclaiming, singing... the good news and putting it into practice. I am not saying that it is not a Christian duty, for it is a human duty to contribute to make good citizens, and good scientists. I am detecting, though, an intriguing parallelism between what our ancestors called the preparatio evangelica and our preparatio scientifica, between preparing oneself for the gospel and our scientific training. There is a similarity between the old.

and now so discussed dictum: extra ecclesiam nulla salus, "outside the church, no salvation," and our practical belief that extra scientiam nulla salus, "outside science there is no salvation for humanity." Without scientific education—we translate—there is no full human life possible. My suspicion is that this is a substitute for the teaching and preaching of the gospel. And we justify ourselves by saying that we create good citizens, great scientists, very honest individuals. I am not saying it is wrong, I am saving this is not Mark 16:15.

One can well understand that, since experiencing that scholastic theological "truth" did not make their students free, the new generations in the Renaissance wanted to test whether the new scientific discoveries would make them freer. Galileo was sociologically right, although philosophically wrong. Bellarmino was sociologically wrong and theologically ill-quoinped, although his philosophical instinct was right.

Today, one starts, once again, to wonder whether modern science—and scientific education—can be a substitute for a liberating wisdom. Another indication that Christians are somewhat uncomfortable with such a substitution is that they justify themselves by saying that they do not only teach science or business but they add ethics. Christian universities teach Ethics, and add that it is Christian ethics. I wonder if anybody knows what a specifically Christian ethics is.

This is also the cloak. There is something uncanny in being satisfied with reducing the Christian mission in "foreign lands" to teach Christian ethics, as if all those countries were unethical, as if we could not reach Buddhist ethics because Buddhism is supposedly not so ethical as Christianity, as if we had to teach Christian ethics because the behavior of others is immoral. This is an unacceptable position. It is a kind of insult to all other religions.

The problems here meet, because each ethical system has a metaphysical basis. Therefore, either we are surreptitiously teaching a sort of Christian metaphysics, or we are simply submitting an ethical system disconnected from the underlying metaphysical assumptions of Buddhism, Hinduism, secularity, and so on, thus not only creating confusion, but also proposing an inefficient ethical system, which will not resist the pressures of ordinary life because it has been left without any metaphysical grounds.

And yet, there is something exceedingly important in the ethical analysis of our prevalent techno-scientific civilization. A sort of consensus is growing across religious boundaries, not excluding secularist religion, that there is something essentially dehumanizing in this technocratic age. This leads us to the next sitra.

#### The Factual Situation of the World Makes a Reform of the System Un-Christian, Destruction Impossible, and Transformation the Only Chance

Reform is un-Christian. I could have similarly said that it is un-Buddhist, and so on. But we will here limit ourselves to a Christian reflection; incidentally, Christianity has been exposed for a longer period to the dehumanizing seeds of the present global system, because the latter is born as a hybrid from Christianity itself. But I

repeat that any traditional critique of the technocratic system, from whatever corner of the world, would lead to similar conclusions.

Putting together the experiences of the Industrial Revolution and the results of the efforts made in these last thirty years to give a human face to the present-day system, we may fairly agree with the most perceptive critics of our times that the period of reforms, and reformations, is over. It would only prolong the agony of an unjust system, it would just rend to make the rich richer, and machines more powerful, and the human person a mere number within an undifferentiated mass—with the only consolation that individuals may indulge their own idiosyncrasies, provided that they do not disturb the general march of society.

I am not alone in taking this stance, in which, curiously enough, both conservatives and progressives seem to agree. But I alone claim responsibility for what I have called "the tragic law of our times" (which that saint Bishop Hélder Câmara did not like much), namely that any positive improvement, within the system, on the micro-level, has negative repercussions on the macro-level. Once we have reached the boundaries of the world market and the saturation degree of our times, any increase in one point is achieved at the expense of a decrease somewhere else, Or, putting it more plainly, in a competitive society, not all can be the winners. Should we remember the transfer of wealth, yearly, by billions of dollars, from the so-called "third world" to the "first," by virtue of the inherent dynamics of the system? Or the foreseeable fact that in the last ten years the GNP of Asia and Africa has decreased by 15 percent, in spite of the fact that some elites of those continents have become immensely rich, and that a middle class has "developed"? Who pays the price? What we have created today, without necessarily any personal ill will (I insist), is worse than the Lumpenproletariat of the first Industrial Revolution. Even accepting that in the long run a reform would yield positive fruits, both Christian and human conscience cannot accept the sacrifice of present-day generations under the pretext that their great-grandchildren will do better.

Destruction is impossible. First of all, the powers that rule the system would not allow it. They are too powerful and too intelligent. They would smash any movement trying to undermine the basis on which modern society rests. For any victim of the so-called terrorists, the official antiterrorist forces have made seven.

Second, these acts of "terrorism" and sheer destruction would only trigger a reaction among the majority of the people, who would then opt for the status quo as a lesser evil.

Third, total destruction, besides being a naive dream, overlooks the fact that not all is evil in the technocratic system, let alone among technocrats. We do not eliminate the archetypes by throwing bombs, to put it in one word. Experience should have taught us the fiasco of revolutions which are only destructive. "Plus pachange, plus c'est la même chose," as the French sarcastically put it. We have only a change, of guard, although under different names, and obviously different people. The new lords simply repeat, and often for the worse, the patterns of their predecessors. The human being is something infinitely deeper than a bundle of needs, and

society much more than an economic market, as if it were at all sufficient to deliver the goods by any efficient deus ex machina.

Fourth, and certainly not least, genuine violence cannot be justified: the ends do not justify the means, not only for extrinsic moral reasons, but also because there is an intrinsic link between the means and the ends. If the means are flawed, they will contaminate the ends being brought about precisely by those means.

Transformation is the only issue. A perhaps more academic word is "metamorphosis." A third, more Christian name is metamoia, so differently translated as penitence, repentance, conversion, change of mentality, and so on. Properly speaking, I would suggest a more literal rendering of the word, and more in consonance with the oriental spirit. It means, or may also legitimately mean, not so much a change of nous, of mentality, but a meta-nous, a going beyond the mental, the nous, a transcending of the purely rational approach to reality.

Whatever this may be, these three names indicate a change in the very form, morphé, essence, rationality, on which we have today based human life on earth. This conversion is more than a moral question. It is metaphysical and, I would add, religious, spiritual, human, radical, even mystical. At any rate, it is something linked with the deepest core of human being.

Here mere theory will not do. Pure investigation would help to preach a good serion, write a nice book, or even convince people. But it will not work. How many drunkards are theoretically convinced that drinking is bad?

Mere praxis is insufficient as well: changing the structures, modifying the constructions, breaking the institutions... Experience should have taught us, by now, that this does not work either. How many revolutions have ended where they began? Theory without praxis is powerless; praxis without theory is blind.

This is nor the proper place for an academic footnote showing how Cicero translated the Greek word theoria into contemplatio, and thus changed the original meaning of the Latin word by implying both action (actio) and theory (contempl-) at the same time. If I merely think about poverty, I may get a clear picture of its nature and causes, and may find it so complex that my action is paralyzed. We do not know where to begin and what has to be done. If I simply try to eradicate poverty, I may worsen the situation in the long run, if I do not strike deeper. On the other hand, if I contemplate on poverty, the thinking, and not the good will alone, will lead me to action as its natural outcome and intrinsic completion. Not without reason the great contemplatives were also activists.

I would like now to say something about the place and role of the universities in this transforming action.

## Universities Should Lead the Intellectual and Corporate Search for Alternatives

Three points may here suffice to introduce this sūtra.

First, the world situation. It is not only the Club of Rome, not only the "prophets of doom," not just the left-wing or alternative organizations . . . there is a mounting

consensus, including official and well-established institutions, around the idea that only fifty more years of existence are left to the world, if we do not introduce radical changes in our lifestyles, and obviously in our ways of thinking and behaving. It became startlingly manifest, just to quote a recent example, in the meeting of the Global Forum for Human Survival, which took place in Oxford a couple of years ago, and will again meet this January 1990 in Moscow. To the thousands of children starving daily we may add the sarcastic fact that the world today feeds an army of some 30 million people engaged in "keeping the peace" on the planet. And yet, there are over twelve hundred war casualties every day in the over twenty major existing armed conflicts. There are roughly one thousand victims of traffic accidents daily, without mentioning all the man-made injustices and exploitations.

In short, there is a mounting unrest among the peoples of the world. And tooday cannot be put down as another rebellion of slaves of old times. The struggle is no longer between classes, races, religions, or even nations. The conflict has been interiorized within all those groups, and even inside the human person as well. Two fellow workers, two Jews, two Roman Carholics, two Thais, a married couple, and a single Man within him- or herself can be torn apart because of fundamental issues they see as of capital importance. The very division between Christian and non-Christian eachers, about which we will have to discuss, proves absolutely unimportant here. The real chasm lies elsewhere. At stake is the very existence of the planet. In spite of all the preprogrammed propaganda of vested interests in describing the benefits of modern civilization, when all is set on the scale, more and more people are beginning to discover that the balance is rather negative. And, paradoxically enough, this sober evaluation is the most realistic sign of a healthy optimism.

Second, the traditional role of universities has been precisely the one of criticizing the status quo. The universities founded by the church, and protected by the princes, have been, throughout their history, one of the main causes that upset the established order. The universities in India today are a clear example of this. They follow an ancient tradition since Frederic Barbarossa, the Sacer Romanus Imperator, who in 1158 made the University of Bologna sui iuris, that is, an independent institution, as it had in fact been since 1088, when some schools began teaching independently of ecclesiastical institutions.

There is a great danger that present-day universities, which were founded long ago and whose protectors have vanished, become now puppets in the hands of the governments that fund them on condition that they support the rulers' interests. I do not need here to elaborate on this point. It will suffice to mention the then secret research, done in many universities throughout the world, for military purposes and the benefit of multinationals. Indeed, since the beginning, the universities did challenge the accerdation and the imperium, the prevailing mystho of that period, as today they have to withstand the pressures of money, the mysthos of our time.

Third, the greatest cry against the present world situation comes from so-called alternative movements, and marginalized people and institutions. An elementary sociological reflection shows that any minority and opposition group, if nor officially

recognized, will develop one-sided opinions and tend to more or less extremist practices. I am not criticizing the extraordinarily important role of all those movements, in spite of perhaps well-founded criticism; I am only introducing the topic of this sitra.

According to it, it belongs to the very nature of a university to be one of the natural loci where an intelligent and thorough critique of the human situation is carried out. Universities should be the natural centers where such theories and actions are studied. And we should remember the existential and emotional contents of the very word studium. If we leave the critique, and the protest when necessary, only to others, then we will share the responsibility for the consequences. The critique of the technocratic complex that conditions our modern life is an essential task of the university roda. This is an intellectual enterprise of the first order.

The universities should react against the fact of simply being considered factories for supplying skilled workers to the needs of the industrial mega-machine. Neither trivium nor quatrivium, neither liberal arts nor even modern sciences were supposed to just train specialized brains who would work in the great world industries, be they called medicine, pharmaceuticals, or sciences. The whole of education has undergone a mutation, and we should be aware of it, if we somehow want to carry on the traditional name of the university. Not without reason were the technical schools in Europe distinguished from universities.

Now, this search cannot be done by the universities alone. Universities need to collaborate with all those other agencies, because they are much more in contact with the real needs and concrete situations. They offer not only experience but also action and practical means. In their turn, they need the university. They not only need the more serene, nonatcached, and intellectual approach that universities can provide; they also need the sociological respectability that a university still carries with it. A symbiosis between the different institutions concerned with these problems is imperative.

I am not advocating which political party the universities should favor, nor am I assuming that they need to be only in the opposition. They could well be the defenders of the established order. I am only saying that they are the natural arena where the interaction should take place, that they are the natural agents of change, and the proper places for the corporate effort of humanity toward a deepening of the theory and praxis of a worthy human life. To give up this ideal, in spite of the many obstacles, would mean to betray the very nature of this institution.

# The "Option for the Poor" Is a University Challenge

I am neither preaching a "social Gospel" nor suggesting that a university should be an institution exclusively dedicated to social justice. I am saying that a university is not an ivory tower outside time and space, and that what has been recently termed the "option for the poor" is more than a decision to fight social inequities and economic injustices. It is an awareness that reflects the situation of the world in which universities also live. It basically indicates a way of thinking, a field of thought that entails a lifestyle in the deepest sense of the word, and an awareness of universal solidarity. I am not saying that universities should compete with activists and religious people in bringing about social reforms. I am stating that the option for the poor is a university challenge, precisely because it entails a way of thinking, and it represents a new vision of human reality. In an existential way, it goes against the bulk of present-day trends and what we call civilization.

I see the new vision of Man like this. Until now, from Hindü gurnkulas to Buddhist centers like Nalanda, Greek institutions like the Academia, Christian monastic schools, scholastic universities, and the more recent secular colleges, university education had simply ignored the other, the mleecha, the nonmonk, non-free citizen, non-Christian, nonorthodox, or nor tich. In a word, the university ignored the other. It was, at best, a nonperson. The option for the poor implies instead an opening to the other, an interest in the widest possible human community, which includes nor only the nonmale, the nonwhite, the non-Christian, the nonconformist, and the handicapped, but the symbol of the really alienated people of our times: the poor.

This does not mean that a university education should not maintain its discipline, standards, and requirements. It means, however, that it does not exclude anyone because of the most alienating factor today, which is precisely no longer sex, race, or religion, but poverty. It means that human solidarity is stretched to its utmost limits.

I see the challenge on a threefold level.

First, on the level of present-day human life. We should learn from the lessons of the past. Slavery was rampant, Nazism came into power, dictatorships of all types were dominant, capitalism was starting to pervade human mentality—and most universities kept quiet and continued doing business as usual. The problem is very complex. The university, as with any other human institution, is nurtured by the spirit of the times, represented by the people of each generation. And yet, it belongs to the essence of the university to transcend those limitations, although without ignoring its contemporary fashions of all sorts. This is precisely its intellectual element. But, as I said earlier, it includes also a contemplative factor that entails an inseparable polarity between theory and praxis. Our time has become aware, perhaps more than any other historical period, of the caste separation or elitist apartheid in which we live. Or, in positive terms, we have become more and more sensitive to human solidarity and to the universal codependence of the peoples of Earth. It would be irresponsible to leave the enhancement of the world to politicians and activists of any sorts. Not only homo faber has an urgent task to perform, homo sapiens too has a role here to play.

Second, the "option for the poor" has been too easily interpreted as an economic issue, thus as an invitation to join the Western trend of classifying humankind in terms of GNPs and purely financial and economic values, and thus to crusade in favor of the Westernization of the world. This is partly due to the relative absence of cooperation on the side of universities. This second level is the level of thinking. To put it simply: poverty, in the gospel, in Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and

practically all religions, is not—mainly—an economic issue. It is a way of life and thus of thinking. It could be brought down to the insight that the most fundamental things in life, those toward which Man has to direct attention and affection, are the most elemental things as well: to speak, love, walk, know, feel, eat, drink, celebrate, be born, grow, die.... Simplicity does not necessarily mean simplification, and the fullness of human life does not require a specialized input of information. Is not the university concerned with education, that is, bringing forth dormant human potentialities, so that we may reach that humanness that is brought about by the cultivation of the spirit of Man?

Third, on the cross-cultural level: it is a paradoxical fact that the most cross-cultural value in today's world is precisely the culture of the poor. They are a cross-cultural reality. And what is this culture if nor a culture of survival? But survival is not only an individual issue for the poor. It is also a collective question for humankind. Furthermore, to survive means to let go of all the accidentals and cultivate the core of life. Translating a French pun into English: to survive (survivne) is to have a sur-vie, a plenitude of life. This leads us directly to the eighth sütra.

#### Christian Universities as Centers of Autochthonous Life

Christianity is, at least, not a nation-bound or culture-tied religion. Theoretially, a Christian university should not feel bound to a particular nationality nor to a specific form of culture. We know, on the other hand, that most universities in Asia, including those of Christian inspiration, were created mainly in order to have an efficient and honest colonial bureaucracy, or the like in those few nations that were not directly under colonial rule; the style was practically the same.

Political colonialism is over, economic imperialism still persists, and cultural mono-morphism is the prevalent model in the universities of Asia. They are, by and large, if not the servants of the state, in any case the obedient followers of the predominant Western scientific and technological pattern; they are the best Trojan horses for the introduction of that culture, which, after originating in the West, has practically extended to the entire planet.

I will not enter into debatable questions as to whether the Asian universities should submit allopathic medicine to critical scrutiny, as well as the nation-state model, and technocracy as the best suitable solutions for the well-being of those parts of the world. I will limit myself to state what seems to derive immediately from the nature of the university and the essence of Christianity, namely that the universities of Asia should cultivate the venerable and rich cultures of their respective countries, and contribute to enhance and transform them. Asia has glorious traditions of culture and spirituality. It belongs to the university education of these countries to study and develop those cultures, not just as subject matters of specialized studies, but as living fields in which the life of the people can reach that maturity for which each human being longs.

In other words, universities should overcome the turelage of church, state, and great corporations, without being exclusively linked to one single cultural or religious world. By so doing, they will contribute to the pluralism that we today urgently need in order not to stick in, and perhaps perish under the totalitarian hegemony of the present technocratic civilization.

It is well known that the separation between religion and culture does not exist in other parts of the word. This means that by "autochthonous life" I also undersand the traditional religions, which by the very fact of being studied and fostered will consequently change and transform themselves. The old saying of making of a Buddhist a better Buddhist, of an animist a better animist, and of course of a Christian a better Christian, applies here directly.

I could also comment on this point from a more political perspective. What the world needs today is decentralization and pluralism to overcome the tempration of the Tower of Babel. The universities have here an indispensable part to play.

All this is very sketchy and imperfectly said. The problems are too overwhelming and complex to let me state them here in all their aspects. This brief mention may suffice.

I would like to add, however, a sort of corollary that I consider of utmost importance and that has relevance not only for Asia but for the world at large. It is what I would like to call the *ontonomy of the Fourth Power*.

Since Montesquieu, the political techniques of governments work best with a certain separation (although the expression separation des pouvoirs does not come from him) of the three classical powers: legislative, executive, and judiciary. I would add a fourth power, which the philosopher of La Brède—who lived still under the Old Regime—did not feel the need to mention. The "fourth power," was then invisible simply because it was taken for granted. Montesquieu lived in a period in which Christendom, albeit secularized and cracking, was still alive. The universities represented that undisputed Pourth Power, because knowledge was still unhallenged at its basis. In India, we have a somewhat similar division of powers in the traditional caste system, in spite of its many degenerations. The Brahman and pandfits, the datayas and gurus enjoy a recognized independent status and power.

Today we can no longer ignore cultural and religious pluralism, on the one hand, and the uniforming tendency of the political and conomical world, on the other, and the latter were independent of any philosophical and religious foundations. The universities, as centers of teaching, learning, and research, are almost instinctively subservient to the prevalent ideology. But this ideology today is, to say the least, insufficient. I maintain that, without recognizing the independence of this fourth power, we will not be able to enjoy a free life on Earth, and we are indeed going to fall victims of one of the worst dictatorships of history.

I use the word *ontonomy* in order to underscore that the relationship between the four powers is neither one of total autonomy nor one of dependent heteronomy from a superior power.

The present situation in Asia seems to me extremely important, and the role of the Christian universities truly momentous. To invest in this fourth power, in the intellectual institutions where the pursuit of knowledge is unhampered by other intentions, is what we need today, both on the national and international levels. It is clear that I am not sponsoring a platonic Republic of philosophers, much less of philosopher kings. This fourth power is free, but ontonomic, that is, intrinsically linked to the whole, independent but not separable from the other three, not at the service of anybody, not even of itself as a separate body. Here is where the traditional worldviews offer more than one point of reflection and inspiration.

The fact that in some "developed" countries the mass media (press included) have been called "the Fourth Estate" because they represent (not forge) public opinions shows to what extent the university has abdicated its role and has been ostracized from life—more than the novitiates of religious orders. Public opinion may be the real fourth power, but where is the free arena for the shaping of such an opinion? I am not extolling any "Oxford accent" or "Herr Professor" mentality. I am saying that the university is an essential part of the human agona.

### The "Conversion" of Religious Traditions

Christians have always tended to convert others. In this, I detect a deeper dynamism than just the—often disputable—zeal for proselytizing. It rather reveals an inner urge for a constant transformation, for a never-ending process of overcoming oneself and all the tight spots of reality, according to that Scripture saying that the Spirit makes all things new. In this sense I speak of conversion of traditional religions, including of course Christianity, into something that is the deeper identity of those very traditions. A constant renovation and transformation, this is the radical metanoia referred to above, and it does require abandoning religions but transforming them. The crisis of most religious traditions today is that they feel incapable of handling the human condition as it is. They need to join hands; otherwise they will become irrelevant, and life will pass them by.

To Christians is should not be very difficult to accept the idea that the salt they are supposed to be does not aim at changing everything into salt, but at enhancing the respective tastes of the various foods. Light—the other famous simile—is invisible in itself, and takes the colors of the bodies it falls upon. A Hindû turns into a better Choffician. Religious pluralism, in other words, does not try to "convert" everything into salt. Christian university centers should foster a renewal of the different traditions. In a few decades, if the world is still alive, many people will begin to say that Hinduism, Buddhism, and all the other religions need to rediscover their own hidden gems that are the essential part of human experience and wisdom. Christians have been too afraid of the other religious traditions. Christians act very often as a sect, as if they were afraid of having a

<sup>7</sup> Ps 104:30.

synagogue, a mosque, or a prayer hall at a Christian university. Are we going to leave without any religious instruction 70 percent or more of our non-Christian students? Are we going to fall prey to a petty competitive spirit, the same that prevails in the technocratic society?

This may look like a contradiction, but I think it is not. The role of Christian universities may well be that of fostering the transformation and renewal of traditional religions, all the more so when they are looked down upon by the elites, dazzled by Western technological achievements. A new religiousness is emerging. Man cannot live without it. The name I successed, from a Christian standoptint. is Christianness.

\*

We were here in order to reflect on the role of the non-Christian teacher. And I dare say that I have not skipped the problem, for my strategy was to turn the question upside down. The role of the non-Christian teacher is the same as the role of the Christian one. We should overcome this dichotomy, without blurring the distinctions. As to the role of Christians in the so-called Christian universities, I am convinced that it is just the same. We all are engaged in the same adventure, and all oars are indispensable.

# Practical Proposals

1. Teach other religions as part of Christian education.

Thus, not only teach Buddhism to Buddhists (which seems a human right, the need of an integral education for a Buddhist), but to teach Buddhism to Christian students as part of the Christian curriculum, welcoming Buddhist students if they join. This would overcome a legal difficulty in many countries (which allow teaching a religion only to the followers of that religion).

2. Overcome the discrimination between Christians and non-Christians.

Also by abolishing the expression "Christian, non-Christian," at least among the staff members. The example of "Christian Democrat" parties, as if they had the monopoly on Christian political principles, should be instructive.

3. A network of collaboration with other agencies, like NGOs, groups promoting social justice, and many other movements, so as to break the isolation of the university and university education—as it has already been done in several universities. This collaboration should not be carried on as an extracurricular activity, but as part of the university education itself.



### 4

### Universal Responsibility

### A Christian Consideration\*

The Dalai Lama asked us to meditate on the Principle of Universal Responsibility. In fact, practically all saints of all traditions preached and lived this principle. A saint—runs a Chinese saying—is a person having the soul of the whole people; for the Indic tradition, such a person is a mahāima, and according to the Western classics, magnanimitas is the feature of saintliness. A "great soul" feels responsible to a wider field than a narrow-minded individual does.

The extremely important call of the Dalai Lama to explore the notion of "universal responsibility" does not ask us to work on a concept, but rather to shed more light on a particular subject. This call existentially expands the field of our responsibility by inviting us to become aware of its universal dimension. Most studies on this notion show that we are not responsible for things we are not aware of. We are only responsible if we are aware that we have to respond to a certain situation, and free in our response. This is why the notion is generally restricted to ethics. The call of Tenzin Gyatso widens our horizon, and reminds us of the—moreover traditional—doctrine that our awareness is not limited to what we see with our eyes, comprehend with our reason, or worse than that, "see" by means of satellites and mass media information. Our awareness, and thus our responsibility, also extends to what meets our "third eye," our faith, our deepest intuition. By doing so, our responsibility opens up unto areas that until now were outside the concerns of common modern Man. Many people can go on with their business as usual because they do not see beyond their private and individual field.

"Responsibility only enters in insofar as one can be called in question by another ... and insofar as one can answer this summons," says Molinski in Karl Rahner's Saxmanentum mundi. The Dalai Lama calls us into question. We have to add, of course, that he is not alone in this call. This is the call of practically all religions, which modern individualism has often overheard. Yet, after the First World War,

<sup>•</sup> From Universal Responsibility: A Felicitation Volume in Honour of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on His Sixtieth Birthday, ed. Ramesh Chandra Tewari and Krishna Nath (New Delhi: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, 1996. \$1-62.

human and especially Western consciousness has been alerted to widen the field of our conscience from its individualistic bulwark to all of human history.

Now the spiritual head of one branch of the Buddhist tradition, in tune with the cosmology of ancient Buddhism, is not satisfied with human history, and enlarges the field of human responsibility to all sentient beings; and as a modern man, following our increasing ecological consciousness (that I prefer to call ecosophical), he suggests that we should include the entire ecosystem of our planet, and one day of our solar system, in our responsibility. The shrinking of our human responsibility is a fruit of modern individualism. The individual is only directly concerned with him- or herself and the immediate surroundines.

To be sure, these voices of concern, to which the ruling powers and the "routine mind" are still reluctant to pay attention, come today—with increasing consensus—from all intellectual and spiritual corners of the world. Humanity as such is responsible for its own destiny. Human history is confronting us with the dilemma of a radical anthropological and therefore civilizational change (metannia), or a collective suicide. If some survive, they will be not the humanly "fittest" but the most unscrupulous, who will destroy each other soon afterward. What we call human consciousness may "transmigrate" into another, nonhistorical realm. Hope may not be lost, but humanity would collapse.

k

What follows is a Christian consideration on one single aspect of this formidable problem. It is a Christian commentary, however, that keeps in mind the reader of other traditions, as it fits this Felicitation Volume. I could also have written a Hindiu or a Buddhist reflection on the topic, and it would be worth the effort to undertake a comparative study. We should, however, not center every reflection on the single concept of responsibility, ignoring the many "homeomorphic equivalents" in other cultures. The Buddhist notion of pratity asamutpåda (codependent origination, universal concatenation, or radical relativity), for instance, will stress the awareness of a common belonging, rather than our ability to respond. We need a multiperspective approach to world problems. This is a requisite for a healthy pluralism.

I choose the Christian tradition because the Dalai Lama quite often meets people with a Christian background who have almost forgotten the Christian archetypes of their religion, an oblivion to which modern Christianity has heavily contributed. For this reason, I will describe what I think belongs to the genuine Christian tradition, although expressed in an understandable way for our contemporaries, to whom the old parlance may present some difficulties—which anyway it is not my intention to hide.

A consideration means an effort to bring all the stars (sidera) together into one intelligible constellation. I could cite teachings, from the Gospels to Teilhard de Chardin (to mention just one name), passing through the Greek, the Eastern and Latin Church Fathers, the Middle Ages, Renaissance and modern Christian thinkers,

to substantiate the Christian notion of a universal responsibility. But I will not use any telescope to gaze at those giant stars: I will just use my naked eye, in submitting this consideration.

The very notion of universal responsibility entails fundamentally three aspects, as these thuman freedom, the universal connection of all things, and the capacity of things or events to respond to the human being.

### Anthropological Freedom

We would not be responsible, if we were robots or puppers in the hands of a higher power of whatever type, be it a God, a society, or a machine. I am responsible if I have, in myself, the ability to respond to the calling of precisely what makes me responsible. Human freedom is an essential ingredient of responsibility.

# Universal Solidarity

We are not responsible for what absolutely lies outside our field of action, or rather outside the effluvia of our being. Responsibility implies a certain solidarity, the karman, sarvam sarvātmakam, buddhakāya, or the pratītyasamutpāda of other traditions.

# Dialogical Cosmology

We are not responsible, either, if the "other," for which we are allegedly responsible, is a merely automatic or prearranged thing under the law of necessity, impervious to human interference. If, in one way or another, I cannot influence that "other," I cannot have any responsibility. My response has to affect that for which I am supposed to be responsible. In a Newtonian universe, for instance, we are not responsible for an eclipse. In an astrological cosmology, we can even conceive our coresponsibility with the course of the eclipse. Responsibility is meaningless in a completely mechanical universe.

I will limit myself to the second point, but I would also like to touch on, at least, the third problem, since it concerns a burning question of our times: the modern scientific cosmology.

Most religious traditions have underscored the unity of the world, be it considered as a creation or otherwise. Many traditions, among which the Christian one, especially stress the unity of humanity, although without denying the oneness of creation. Another pitiful restriction has also occasionally occurred: some religions have de facto limited "humanity" to the people of their own tradition. The outsiders

have been, if not totally forgotten, certainly neglected in the doctrinal elaborations of this unity of the human race.

The history of Christianity has been since the very beginning split between an inherited idea of chosen people and an inherent idea of universality. The Jewish idea of chosenness clashes against universality clashes against privilege. This tension remains quite unresolved in the present time. But, after two millennia of history, I see that the prevalent trend today is to qualify chosenness and to reinterpret universality. "Catholicity," for instance, is no longer understood as a (rather modern) geographical universalism, nor as the possession of an exclusive truth, but as something closer to the universality of a mirror, which reflects the whole without claiming to be the only image of the whole. This was, incidentally, the original understanding of the word "catholic," up to times pass St. Augustine's.

"Am I perchance my brother's keeper?" a sked the first "normal" human being in the Bible (Adam and Eve being certainly not ordinary people). Yes, you are! was the unambiguous answer. In order to escape this universal responsibility, the human race has been tempted, ever since the beginning, to reduce the extension of our "brother." Responsibility was restricted to our "neighbors." "But who is my neighbor?" the rabbi from Nazareth was asked, and He was bold enough to answer that it was the foreigner, the stranger, the "heathen," the goy, kafir, mleecha. . . . Our responsibility includes all people. Jesus summed up "salvation" in having an active responsibility for the welfare of downtrodden people, up to the extreme of identifying himself with the naked, hungry, imprisoned, sorrowful, and suffering Man.<sup>3</sup>

Let us reintroduce the problem from another, more elementary perspective. Why on earth should I be responsible for the murder committed in a distant island by an unknown fellow for reasons that are totally incomprehensible to me? The language is treacherous; I should not have said "fellow," since the very word denotes a certain partnership, which is precisely what is at stake in the example. Is that fataway person my "fellow"? Or have we a fellowship only with our family, clan, caste, nation, religion, culture? The only rational answer is that, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or not, we belong together, and are not isolated individuals, unconnected monads, independent beings.

In a word, universal responsibility implies a certain type of universal solidarity. Individuals can only be linked by external ties, like a common interest. The moral responsibility that flows from a common goal is limited to the means used in order to reach that goal. It is a legal notion.

<sup>1</sup> Gn 4:9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lk 10:29.

<sup>3</sup> Mr 25:31ff.

F. H. Bradley wrote. "For practical purposes, we need make no distinction between responsibility and liability to punishment." This is the usual way of understanding responsibility, in a predominantly economical worldview. I cannot be "accountable" for what lies outside my account. If there is no ontological unity of the human race, there is no universal responsibility. There is no) accountability for the accounts into which we have put our investments. This individualism is what leads modern citizens to express, more or less loudly. "If the power lies exclusively on the people, and I am people, and I have not voted on the constitution (of a country, for example), why am I obliged to obey that law as sacrosanct?" Individuals feel united only if there is a common purpose (nationalisms and parochialisms of all sorts), or if there is a sanction or a threat coming from law, police, or army. No wonder that our planet has more than 40 million people in the armed forces. They "enforce" (!) law and order, because there is no sense of responsibility.

Legal responsibility simplies a prior contract, at least implicitly. Ethical responsibility towands an azt least tacitly acknowledged—moral code. We have responsibility toward others (legal responsibility) and toward ourselves (ethical). None of this alone can be the basis for a universal responsibility. Here is the place and role of religion in general. It relinks (re-ligio) Man with something above the merely "human" through the active acknowledgment of a vertical dimension. Here are the place and role of God, in the Christian tradition. Our response to this one God oversteps the boundaries of a mere responsibility toward society or toward my own self. God does not discriminate between people, as Christian Scripture says." The other, in front of God—in conspectu Domini, said the Scholastics—has the same rights as I do.

We should not confuse the universal responsibility we are trying to describe with the recognition of a single universal moral code. The mores of the peoples are very different, and so are their ways of thinking. From each worldview it is possible to derive a sense of universal responsibility, but each culture may have its own stand-point and interpret and justify this responsibility in diverse forms. To be sure, our contemporary situation asks us to work on a political consensus letting us deal with the problems of world society, but no culture should impose its views on another. We urgently need a political "dialogical dialogue" for the sake of our world, but this does not mean that, for instance, we should proclaim a global ethic while ignoring the role of ancestors, the place of all other living beings, and the function of the divine, so central in many traditions, just because those things seem irrelevant for our present-day political system. The pragmatism of political behavior, needed as it may be, is something different from a global ethic; and, furthermore, different from our problem.

In sum, there is universal responsibility only if there exists a universal human link of an ontological nature—but I am well aware that this is a very specific language. The best example is the Christian dogma of the Mystical Body, to which I now turn.

<sup>4</sup> See Ac 10:34: Rom 3:22: erc.

58 CHRISTIANITY

The Hebrew Bible stresses the unity of creation from its very first lines. The entire universe is the creation of one God, and the whole world sings the glory of its Creator. The world is a unity.

Christian Scripture, on the other hand, while fully accepting this oneness, emphasizes the unity of humankind. The "recapitulation" of all things is accomplished by one Man who becomes the Head of this Cosmic Body. Christ is a cosmic Christ. but He is above all the head of humankind, besides being the head of the whole cosmos, called makranthropos6 (not unlike the Vedic Purusa) by the Greek Fathers. The "heresy" of the Ebionites did not consist in denying that Jesus was the son of Mary, but in denying that "Christ was before Mary" (or to defend that Christum ante Mariam non fuisse, in the words of St. Jerome). The confusion between Jesus and Christ had dire consequences in Christian history, "Jesus is the Christ" is the Christian mahāvākva, the Christian confession of faith. Yet, the Mystical Body of the Christian tradition is not just Iesus, the son of Mary, but the Mystical Body of Christ. This Christ, "light which enlightens all Men," "splendor and image of the Godhead," "upholding all things by His word," "superior to all angels," "alpha and omega," "only begotten Son," and "firstborn of all creatures," who was "before Abraham," and "in whom all things are grounded,"7 etc .- this Christ, the "mystery hidden since the beginning in God,"8 is discovered by Christians in and through Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Christian tradition, human solidarity has two pillars and one ground: the first Adam, created in the image and likeness of God; the second Adam, Jesus the Christ, incarnated in time and history in order to reestablish the image and likeness of the divine in Man; the ground being the eschatological expectation of "a new heaven and a new earth" at the apokatastasis panton, 10 the time of "universal restoration," which St. Augustine sums up by saying, "And there will be One Christ loving himself" (et erit unus Christus amans seipsum).11

The very name "Adam," in fact, simply means Man-Man as such, not just an individual. All are under "original sin" because of the universal human solidarity between the first Adam and the rest of mortals (otherwise, why should we share the responsibility of Eve?). All have been restored to the undistorted divine image because of the human solidarity between the second Adam and the rest of humanitytheological distinctions and philosophical problems notwithstanding. This is, at

<sup>5</sup> Ep 1:10.

See, respectively. In 1:9: Heb 1:3-4: Rev 1:8: In 1:14: Col 1:15: In 8:58: Col 1:17.

<sup>8</sup> See Col 1:26. 9 Rev 21:1.

<sup>10</sup> Ac 3:21.

In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos 10.3 (PL 35.2055).

least, the explicit teaching of the Apostle Paul, confirmed by most of the so-called Ecumenical Councils. And all will be integrated into the regressus or the return of all things to their origin, from which they have emerged (ggressus), so that at the end, "God will be all in all things." This is the reason why St. Thomas, following Augustine's idea of evil as a lack of being (privatio), dares affirm that sinners quasinners" are not" (precatores in quantum peccatores non sunt). Christian solidarity is universal and whole.

Obviously, both language and ideas are set in a particular cultural context and against the background of their contemporary worldview. As Adam is a common name that has been particularized in the story of creation, Christ also is a common name that has been applied to the son of Mary. But, as the action of the first Adam is renewed at the birth of every person, so is the action of the second Adam at the rebirth of every human being. Both are historical and transhistorical events, even though a certain Christian theology afterward interpreted the rebirth in a very particular manner—although never so exclusive as to deny many forms of that initiation into eternal life, which Christians call baptism.

Similarly, traditional Christianity has believed in the final oneness of both human history and the cosmos, so as to understand the entire reality as a radical Trinity: Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. This Christ encompasses the whole history of the universe, the complete temporality of reality integrated in the divine Mysetcy. 'In rebus tantis trina confunctio mundi' sings the Christian litury, in a slightly different but fitting way. This radical Trinity is the true mysterium confunctionsis, the "threefold con-junction" of the Real.

So, a Christian believes in the total solidarity of humanity—extended to the entire universe, as many scriptural passages affirm, and as it has been elaborated by the later tradition. It is the entire creation that "groans and waits for the total transformation of the cosmos," toward the "new heaven and the new earth." It would have little meaning to believe in one Creaton, if there is not one creation. This is religion: we are all "linked" together in the same adventure. In fact, a certain notion of universal responsibility did trigger, in all of its ambivalence, the missionary urge of the Christian churches. They, rightly or/and wrongly, felt responsible for the whole world.

\*

We may now "bring all stars together" (con-sider it) by citing just one luminous source in the Christian galaxy. Our choice should sound significant to modern Westerners, insamuch as we do not choose an Easterner, a Greek, or a modern witness, but a man who has decisively influenced (be it a blessing or not) the self-understanding of the most powerful branches of Christianity: St. Augustine, the fifth-century African bishop.

<sup>12 1</sup> Cor 15:28.

<sup>13</sup> See Rom 8:19-23.

His leading idea follows in the wake of St. Paul and, of course, the Gospels: "Extend your love over the entire earth, if you want to love Christ, since the members of Christ are to be found everywhere in the world. If you love only one part, you are divided; if you are divided, you are not in the Body; if you are not in the Body, you are not under the Head." <sup>14</sup>

Or again: "All Men are One Man in Christ, and the unity of Christians constitutes but One Man." And further: "And this Man is all Men, and all Men are this Man; for all are one, since Christ is one." 16 And moreover: "If he is the Head, and we are the members, then he and we together are the whole Man." 17

Dozens of such sentences could be added. According to Augustine, we can understand Christ in three ways (*tribus modis intelligitus*, et nominatur): as God equal to the Father, as Man (assumpta carne), and, third, as the "whole Christ in the fullness of humanity" (torus Christus in plenitudine ecclesiae).<sup>18</sup>

For the sake of brevity, we will not proceed further, nor quote from throughout the Christian tradition regarding this central tener of the Mystical Body. We may refer here to the outstanding multivolume work, *The Whole Christ*, by Emile Mersch, published just before World War II.

I will conclude with few more general considerations.

Many authors, in discussing the problem of responsibility, stress the moral responsibility concerning our human actions. We are responsible for our actions, we are told, and according to them we will be "judged." One of the best descriptions is given by Maurice Blondel, stating that "la responsabilité est la solidarité de personne avec sea actes" (responsibility is one's solidarity with his/her own acts). It is interesting to notice that already one century ago Blondel spoke of "solidarity," not of "consistency" between our being and our actions. Responsibility is not the logical consequence of our ideas (as Kierkegaard would basically maintain) but the very manifestation of our being. Our responsibility is not the conclusion of a syllogism or the application of a rule, but the free response of our being to the challenges that existence confronts us with. A stone is not responsible for its falling, nor a fire for its burning—without now entering the issue of the degree of freedom in so-called inanimate things.

In one word, we are not only responsible for our actions but also for our thoughts (as the famous incident of Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts of the Apostles shows: "You have lied not to Men but to God"19). Responsibility is not only toward ourselves

<sup>14</sup> In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos 10.8 (PL 35.2060).

<sup>15</sup> Enarrationes in Psalmos 29.II.5 (PL 36.219).

Enarrationes in Psalmos 127.14 (PL 37.1686).
 In Evangelium Ioannis 21.8 (PL 35.1568).

<sup>18</sup> Sermones 341.1 (PL 39.1493).

<sup>19</sup> Ac 5:4.

but toward the indwelling divine Spirit in us. This is why Jesus also said that we will be held responsible for every idle word coming out of our mouth<sup>20</sup>—or, translating it in a more rigorous way, "of every word which does not make what it says."

Carrying on the example we gave before, I cannot know why that faraway person in that remote island did what she did. I cannot even know the whole outcomes of my actions, and all my best intentions notwithstanding, I cannot foresee the good or bad effects of my words. The "place" of our responsibility does not lie in the good or bad example we give, nor in the good or bad effect we have on others, but in our very being. The place is inside us, it is ourselves. Responsibility is not mere prudence, and much less the fruit of an objective calculus foreseeing the effects of our words or actions. It is not cunning, nor a strategy for attaining prestige, good name, and better results. Responsibility is an ontological virtue, because our being is dialogical, and we are neither a solipsistic monad nor a dialectical individual. Our responsibility is based on the response we give to ourselves, to our being, because our being is constitutively related to all other beings. And this relatedness is a human relation, that is, dia-logical, sharing our logos (Homo loquens) with all beings. What links us with other beings-the traditional Christian answer would sav-is not the fact that we, for example, know about that faraway person, but the fact of sharing the very Ground of our being, or God, God is the warrant of our universal solidarity. If I am not as I have to be, if I betray myself, if I am not up to the divine calling that constitutes me, the entire universe suffers from my infidelity, and that "faraway person" will commit that hideous act because (perhaps in a minimal way) I have contributed to it

It would be an undue extrapolation if we interpreted this in a mechanistic way, and say, for instance, that my responsibility toward that "faraway fellow" is simply one six-thousand-millionth of the share. The greater my "soul" is, the bigger my responsibility. The being of a saint hallows an entire society. "To whom less has been given, less will be demanded." <sup>23</sup> Every being is unique, and we cannot judge others. The interconnectedness is not a quantitative dimension, nor the relationship a mechanical one.

Paradoxically, the awareness of our universal responsibility gives us calmness and peace, because it saves us from the "messianic syndrome" of wanting to be the saviors of the world—and falling into despair, depression, or indifference as soon as we realize we cannot perform that task. Not that we skip our duty or water down our responsibility, so that it does not matter much whatever we do. On the contrary, being aware of our responsibility, intrinsic to our very being, we do not frantically try to influence other people or to "convert" them (to our view, of course) by extrinsic means of propaganda, power, and money. What matters, instead, is the purity of our heart, the transparency of our lives. Not even the left hand should know the good deeds that the right is performing, 22 Christians have been warned to witness

<sup>20</sup> Mr 12-36

<sup>21</sup> See Lk 12:47-48.

<sup>22</sup> Mt 6:3.

62 CHRISTIANITY

without asking for money,<sup>23</sup> and they know that the event that most influenced their lives (and human history to a great extent), the event that took place in Bethlehem, had neither reliable witnesses nor press coverage.

Needless to say that the traditional Christian idea of God as the foundation for universal responsibility is not the only possible hypothesis nor language. I mentioned at the beginning the notion of karman and pratityasamutpāda as other homeomorphic equivalents for the foundation of a universal responsibility.

It is an interesting feature of our times that there seems to emerge a particularly strong consensus (triggered by an increasing awareness of common human problems) coming from the grassroots of human experience, not from a deductive or doctrinal approach to reality. The human race is today keenly aware of common problems, although this does not mean that there must be common solutions.

Our contemporary awareness is little sensitive to a deductive morality, such as, "There is a God, therefore I have to behave in a certain way," or "Buddha has said this way or that way, therefore I should practice this and that," or "Our Veda stands for this, therefore I should behave like that." It rather happens the other way round: we perceive the deterioration of the Earth, the increasing human exploitation by other human beings, the man-made injustices, hunger, wars, and so on, and we look for strength and remedies in order to apply them within our respective cultural systems, discussing which remedy seems the most effective one, or which belief the most convincing.

The description of this modern myth needs but one important proviso. It would be a degradation of religion, and a demeaning human attitude, to use religions as mere means and understand Men as simple forces in the overall running of the universe. All religions, as a matter of fact, warn us that Man is not the absolute Lord neither in leaven nor on earth, that our solidarity is not something we create, but this solidarn is something given, and our responsibility is precisely this human capacity: not to ask, primarily, but to respond. Our responsibility entails the intuition that we are respondent beings, responding to a Question that we have not ultimately formulated. Universal responsibility does not mean some universal lordship over reality, but the fact that we have this power, perhaps the most distinctly human power, to respond refer to to the mystery of Reality—and by responding, steer the destiny of Reality.

Christians believe that they are not alone in this task.

<sup>23</sup> See Mt 10:8.

# Toward a Phenomenology of Interculturation

The Case of India1

Any in-depth reflection on interculturation involves a theological change in how we comprehend religions in general and Christianity in particular. To focus on and carry out this change is one of the goals of the next millennium. Since we cannot, obviously, deal with this problem separately or in one essay alone, for the sake of concision I will be forced to forgo a philosophical-theological approach and limit myself to expressing a few phenomenological considerations.

# The Sociological Aspect

There is something phenomenologically fascinating and theologically important in the indisputable characteristic of the universalistic expansionism of Christianity. But is it a matter of "Christian faith" or of the Western spirit? Is it a de inter phenomenon, intrinsic to the very nature of Christianity, or simply de facto that Christians want to convert the whole would, and that they are now reluctantly giving up because they find they cannot achieve it? I would like to support the latter hypothesis, but the former has been too widespread to be discarded completely. Christian thought, in fact, is divided on this matter, and both opinions are still supported today.

It is significant that a few years ago the Christian debate on dialogue was viewed by some as the latest Christian conversion strategy (albeit in the best meaning of the term). Dialogue was not regarded as something intrinsically human; it was not viewed as a religious act in itself, without any ulterior motive that would compromise its true nature as a common search for truth and understanding. Today something similar may occur in relation to the concept of inculturation. Some regard it as the new strategy for evangelization after the colonial period of the Church is over. Others see it as part of the true driving force behind the encounter between religions. Personally, of course, I share the latter view.

Original text: "Verso una fenomenologia della interculturazione. Il caso dell'India," in Testimonianze 4-5 (San Domenico di Fiesole, 1996): 83-90. Translated by Geraldine Clarkon

I am not discussing here the meaning of evangelization. I am simply reacting against any use of the term "inculturation" (however noble the intention) that does not intrinsically contain the true nature of the process of inculturation. This is why I prefer to use the longer and less attractive word intervulturation.

In past times, Christian theology preserved the Christian identity through differentiation, and theologians created a barrier against syncretism. Christianity came to India not as a seed, but as a fully organized religion with a clearly defined system of dogmas, rituals, and structures. Today, however, the past gives way to a new situation.

"Today a growing number of Christians, many of whom are far more theologically aware of their religious responsibilities, perceive this sort of schizophrenia with at least a feeling of unease. They suffer the pressures of the past and the fear of the present. Apart from the case of Kerala, Christianity in India has for centuries retained a particular colonial flavor. It was the religion of the West. It was received in India on the assumption that no interference would have damaged the existence of the other faiths, yet no abstract notion can deny the fact that Christianity was a de factor imported religion, and the religion of the rulers, indeed. It was feared that interculturation might be a new political maneuver, rather than a natural flow of intercommunication. Christians have never experienced the tension of the relationship between Hindis and Muslims, but their coexistence was something unnatural.

Today there is no doubt that "inculturation" has become a slogan for breaking religious raboos and apartheid. To many, this means respect for native culture, detachment from Westernized habits, willingness to be embodied within the host culture, and the noble effort to make themselves understood, although without distorting the Christian message in the attempt to apply it in a culturally different world. It would be unfair to blame this process as a propaganda campaign set up to deprive Christianity of the customs and forms inherited from a foreign past, adopted uncritically at the time of colonialism. At the same time, however, it would be shortsighted not to take into account the diffidence and resistance of traditional Hinduism, for example. Furthermore, it would not be honest to ignore this resistance, and proceed with a partial interculturation that could turn into a new colonialist invasion. We might not recognize the right of private religious ownership, but we must allow the right of human ownership. Interculturation, in this sense, recognizes the ancient tradition of human and religious hospitality.

In analyzing the phenomenon of interculturation, I clearly state that (as in the question of dialogue I referred to earlier) inculturation is simply the natural result of two cultures joining together in a symbiotic relationship. They set up this relationship when they overcome diffidence, fear, and the desire for power, and make an effort to enter into a relationship of trust, love, and friendship, which leads spontaneously to an exchange involving the teaching/learning process of the respective cultures. This, in turn, leads to the cross-fertilization I have so often talked about.

I also stress, not less clearly, that the slightest degree of market mentality, the slightest lack of total purity and spontaneity in the inculturation process, causes it to be questionable and false. There are many types of cold war.

These are the sociological aspects, and their interpretation must be made case by case. The overall phenomenon, however, suggests that there is something more than a rigged strategy of recalcitrant crypto-colonialism. The fact that many of these movements are viewed with suspicion by the respective churches, and that many of the promoters of inculturation seem to undermine the main traditions of each side, leads me to think that there is a profound reason for this universal phenomenon. Many religions are on the verge of change. An example may help us here to be more concise.

The universities of India (as elsewhere in Asia and Africa) are a clear example of unilateral inculturation. The gurd's home (Gurudual) has been transformed into college, the centers of monastic learning into universities, and the traditional ways of thinking and teaching, as well as the disciplines themselves, have been translated into foreign forms. Imitation is rampant. No single, specific author, of course, is behind this operation. It was and is still in the spirit of the times, for better or worse, that the technocratic civilization is spreading throughout the world, even though we could give a partial explanation for its power, prestige, and so on. It is also sociologically evident that there is an opposite movement toward indigenization, and that this movement is generally launched by those who have previously been saturated by other cultures. The so-called alternative movements represent a healthy reaction for counterbalancing an excessively unilateral and homogeneous model of human civilization. It is in relation to this general background that the problem of finculturation should be tackled.

#### Three Models of Christian Inculturation

Let us assume (for heuristic reasons, if nothing else) that there is an original "Christian event." Without entering into theological discussions, we can detect it in the resurrection of Jesus, He whom the Christian tradition calls Christ-an event of salvation that we may set in the Pentecost. This event requires testimony, belief, and possibly, the sharing of it in its full power. The traditional Christian experiences this sharing as part and parcel of the Christian calling.

In summing up, let me outline three models of inculturation.

a. The first model is the transplant. We have transplanted a church, along with the entire system of symbols of a doctrinally—and culturally—developed Christianity. A large part of all that goes by the name of evangelization falls within this category. Many of the Christian conversions that have taken place in the last twenty centuries came about through colonization. A new plant from an alien culture is simply sown on foreign soil.

Transplanting the church was the motto of the Christian missionary movement after the First World War. One of the leaders of this movement was Pierre Charles, who was by no means consciously colonialist. He had a mystic idea of the church; he wanted to transplant what today we might call a Comunidad Eclesial de Base? The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A democratic "Community of Believers": small Catholic groups in Latin America. [n.d.t.]

church that was imported, however, was in actual fact a powerful tree deeply rooted in Western soil. The Christian community grows and culturally influences its host culture, yet it needs protection from other cultures: ecclesiastical protection, such as the Christians of Kerala defended by the foreign hierarchy, or the last Christians protected by the Western political and financial power.

Though they may be perceived as oases, Christian communities will not be able to remain closed for much longer, especially because political power cannot survive for long, and colonialism will very soon be no longer acceptable. And this brings us gradually to the second model.

b. The second model is adaptation. Times change, generations follow one another, cultural barriers are overcome, the Christian community matures. We become aware that the Event needs to be understood in a new context. Christians must adapt to this new context, if they are to be comprehended, and even to survive. They discover that "quidouil recipitur ad modum recipients recipiturits."

The transplanted Christian colony will sooner or later come into contact with the land around it, from which it will increasingly draw substance for its growth. First, perhaps, it will take only the external forms of the gestures, culture, and lifestyles, but slowly it will also begin to adopt and adapt ways of thinking and to develop new interpretations.

One of the most important factors in this adaptation is, of course, language. Not only do people speak the local language, but they also begin to pray in this fanguage, and translate into it the sacred Scriptures. This fact triggers off a very strong trend of interculturation. Once the language of the people comes into use, theological discrimination will not survive for long. Adaptation is a step that occurs naturally. The adoption of the language of the other culture follows its own course, but the problem arises with religious language: Can we use the same name for God, for example, if we do not have the same concept of God's 1s is appropriate to translate all terms?

Wherever people have shared a common life we have had examples of inculturation. It is not a specifically Christian case. There are around 14 million Hindús in the West. They began to have a taste of interculturation both through the adoption of Western forms and by prompting their non-Hindú neighbors to adopt some of their own cultural values. Over forty years ago the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission used to wear the Roman Catholic collar in the United States, and today we still hear of Buddhist "priests" and Hindú "churches" in the West. After centuries of living together in more or less closed communities, the Christians in India began to break out of their ghetro mentality, once the secularization of the now independent nation rid them of their fears and constrictions. No wonder the problems of inculturation are today quite powerfully emerging.

c. A third model is grafting—for example, cross-fertilization. Contact is not merely osmotic, superficial; it is part of the vital sap of a culture and produces a new lifestyle. When a certain type of inculturation has taken root and begins to bear

<sup>3</sup> Everything that is received, is received according to the features of the recipient.

aurochtonous fruit, the ultimate difficulty is not understanding the doctrine that seeks to explain the Event, but its very interpreters. It regards the important question of identity. One comes to realize that, if the sphere of pure objectivity exists at all, it certainly does not in religious matters. The Christians of India (coming back to our example) have more or less consciously begun to realize that there is a danger of cultural schizophrenia in maintaining a strict dichotomy between their beliefs, which are based on the Abrahamic way of thinking, and the rest of their life expressed in Hindia categories.

The ultimate paradigm of interculturation implies a particular understanding of the Christic Fact as something that no existed since the beginning of the world as an inner energy that guides and an outer light that attracts. In this sense, inculturation is the symbiosis of two traditions that allows us room to freely trust in the inner vitality of the principles involved. Inculturation thus means the inner transformation of Christianity through the emergence of a new cultural awareness, the recognition that the Christian event is an event of Christianness, and not Christianity. Christianness is a leaven of the world and not of a specific religion; it is one of the living seeds of human tradition and not a particular doctrinal system, no matter how open and sensitive. It may imply a new awareness of the Christological event, after two thousand years of inculturation, within those cultures that have shaped Christianity. It may mean a new death, the prelude to a new resurrection, like a light that illuminates every person who comes into this world, \*aghter than just another torch.

If this is so, a new series of problems could naturally arise. Christianity would hen just be one of many religions, and would have to be judged on its merits, while Christianness would refer to a fact of experience produced by the faith (not the beligf) in Christ (the kenotic Christ) revealed in an indefinable variety of ways (albeit mutually exclusive). This is what I have expounded on elsewhere, calling it Mystery—the Christian name for which being Christ, but regarding which Christians have neither the monopoly nor full knowledge. Here, once again, pluralism is fundamental. It is not that there are many centers of reality, or that each religion is equally good, or that there are many centers of reality, or that each religion is equally good, or one on many; it is not a quantifiable category.

We have imperceptibly moved from the classic idea of Christianity as "the superior religion" to the idea of Christianness as an experience that might be grafted into other religions. Salt has no wish to transform everything into salt, but to increase the flavor and quality of all the foods it salts—to make the Hindů a better Hindů and, certainly, the Christian a better Christian.

We have spoken, however, of cross-fertilization or symbiosis. The Christian seed acts as leaven outside the historical Christian tradition, but other seeds of life of other religions are equally able to transform Christianity. This must be emphasized.

<sup>4</sup> See In 1:9.

Christians are not alone in the world, nor is Christianness the only form in which the Spirit can be at work.

An example might prove more eloquent than any further theoretical disquisitions.

It is a sociological fact that the majority of Christians have neglected the mystical dimension. It is also a fact that the larger part of the Hindit tradition has disgraded the secular-social dimensions. This third model of inculturation will serve as a stimulus to help the Christian tradition recover or develop its contemplative aspects, and the Hindit tradition recover or develop its social commitment. Christians and Hindis will interact and become better Christians and better Hindis. The concept of sacrament and sacrifice, to give another example, might be enriched by this mutual fecundation.

In this case, the question of inculturation will no longer be a vehicle for Christianity. It will be a vehicle for improving the humanum, for adopting cultural forms that are most conducive to a more complete human life. Is it not fullness of life, abundance of life that Christ said He brought into the world?

### The Situation Today

Today the situation is complex. Apart from the theoretical problems, the practicate of things appears to be characterized by three dramatis personae, each of which has a dual role.

a. First there is Christianity, with a twofold interpretation. Simplifying the issue for the sake of concision, on one hand there are those who believe in Christianity as an absolute religion. This attitude does not mean condemnation of other religions or an intolerant, aggressive, crusaderlike spirit. It can be compatible with patience, tolerance, acceptance of the impenetrable design of divine Providence, and acknowledgment both of the unworthiness of Christians and the great values of other religions. This type of Christianity is maintained by the difficult and unpopular conviction that it has been given a divine mission that no human power on earth can quash. This seems to be a distinctive characteristic of Abrahamic religions: both Hebraism and Islam have similar traits.

On the other hand, however, a growing number of Christians, without diluting their own beliefs and their own commitment, choose to interpret their faith in a relativizing way that excludes both absolutism and relativism. They see a sort of transcendental relationship between their faith and the actual creed they profess. They imagine Christianity as a true religion, as the only form of religiosity that fits them, just as the parents of each of us are unique. Yet they do not want to extrapolate beyond the contextual aspects of their creed and fall into an a prioristic universalization to which they do not feel entitled.

The former regard inculturation as a divine right. The latter would prefer interculturation by natural osmosis within the existing confines, believing that it will eventually lead to cosmic order, truth, the great harmony, or something similar.

<sup>5</sup> Jn 10:10.

b. In Hinduism we have a parallel schema. Some feel they have a right of owner-ship over the cultural and religious riches of their own tradition, while others are more inclined to believe that all positive values and all wholesome attitudes belong to the sanatana-dharma of an indefinable "Hinduism."

The first group will attempt to bring back to the Hindű community those last generations of Indians who, in the eyes of the group, have abandoned the higher path and trampled their deepest identity underfoot. The second group, meanwhile, will be more inclined to believe that all religions are equal and all can have good and bad structures. Better a good Christian than a bad Hindű. Their respective reactions to Christian inculturation are obviously different. The first see it as a threat, the second as a challenge. Christian inculturation in Hinduism will arouse indignation in the first group and a defensive artitude in the second.

Significantly, traditional Hindûs will not try to carry out their own inculturation, but will adopt a 'live and let live' policy, convinced that they are following their karman and a correct svadbarma. On the other hand, the more universalist Hindûs, whom for convenience we call sanatana-dharmists, will tend to make attempts at inculturation, believing themselves to be the bearers not of a specific Hindû faith but of a more universal and, therefore, universalizable set of symbols and practices.

c. Adding to the complexity of this panorama, moreover, is the two-sided nature of the technocratic civilization. We are all, to different degrees, under its influence, yer some accept it and welcome it as salvation or, at least, as a positive path for humankind, while others are very critical on various levels, from tolerating it as a minor evil to recieting it totally.

Paradoxically, secularity will then appear as a platform in which mutual interculturation can take place. Hindûs and Christians will then meet in the market square of the secular city, and consider their respective faiths as different factors that contribute to the well-being of the society. The secular culture will penetrate into both traditional religions, and will create a certain common ground—which the more traditionalistic faithful will perceive as a threat to both religions. It is important to distinguish between secularism and secularity: the former is an ideology that negates transcendence, the latter is the consciousness of the ultimate reality of the world's spatiotemporal structures, which must be integrated with the self-awareness of both religions.

It is in this threefold bipartite scenario that the question of interculturation develops. In modern society, even in India, the secular structure of society increasingly provides the forums in which the encounter may take place. This, on the one hand, relativizes the problem of inculturation and, on the other, transforms it into secular inculturation.

All these forces are at work, and to have a well-balanced view of the overall problem each of them must be taken into account.

Here we will end these prolegomena, which should be followed by an intellectual and positive attempt to tune the individual sounds to the real symphony.



6

# On Christian Identity

### Who Is a Christian?\*

For whoever wishes to save one's own life, will lose it; Yet whoever loses one's own life for my sake, will find it.

Mt 16:251

This entire study is a meditation on this text. A free translation of it would be:
"Whoever cares to preserve one's own identity is lost: whoever gives it up for my

In C. Cornille, Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002). 121–44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare traditional and modern translations: "For whosoever will (would) save his fits hall lost it, and whosoever will (shall) lost his fit for my sake shall find it," (AV [RV]). And practically the same appears in the New Revised Standard Version, the Revised English Bible, the New American Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, and many others. Only the New English Bible translates; "Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self." (C. also Mt 10:38–39; LK 17:33), In 12:25; etc.—besides the scriptural texts on the cosmic Christ.

This topic was discussed in Strasbourg, June 30–July 9, 1976, in the X International Ecumenical Seminar sponsored by the Institute for Ecumenical Research under the theme. "Christian Identity—Confessional Identity—Christian Unity." See a review in Journal of Ecumenical Studies 14, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 195-96. It was also the topic of the Fall Meeting (November 19-20, 1976) of the Pacific Coast Theological Society, under the title of "Christian Identity in a Time of Pluralism," at which I delivered one of the position papers. An abridged version of the present article was delivered as number 17 of the Warren Lecture series at the University of Tulsa (US) on October 4, 1991. I refer also to the contributions of other publications: Michael Amaladoss et al. (eds.), Theologizing in India (Bangalore: TPI, 1981); Paul Puthanangady, ed., Sharing Worship: Communicatio in sacris (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical, and Liturgical Centre, 1988); Paul F. Knitter, ed., Pluralism and Oppression (Lanham, MD: University Press of America for the College Theology Society, 1991). The international review Concilium also dedicated its issue number 216 (March 1988) to the question of Christian identity. More recently the same review, Concilium, insists on the theme of the "biographic, moral, and religious perspective of identity" in issue 285 (April 2000). Charles Duquoc, one of the editors, introduces the issue, affirming that "Christians are not sure of their own identity." See also Jacques Scheuer and Denis Gira, eds., Vivre de plusieurs religions (Paris: Les Éditions de l'Atelier, 2000).

sake, will attain the true identity"—which for the Christians is called the Christian identity.

### Identity in Pluralism

The question is double: Who is a Christian? and What is a Christian? A purely subjective" or a merely "objective" answer will not do Justice to the problem. We shall have to blend the two together and take a standpoint that overcomes the modern philosophical split between subject and object. Who and what is a Christian are answered neither by a personal subjective feeling nor by an impersonal objective doctrine. Furthermore, the answers are manifold. There is no single answer as to who a Christian is or what the Christian identity may be. The answer to the question of Christian identity is in face pluralistic.

What does it mean? A strictly univocal answer condemns all the other answers as inadequate or even false, while an equivocal answer would not be an answer at all. But the answer is not even analogous. If we were to succeed in finding a deeper or a common core underlying all the plural answers, then this primum analogatum would become the basis for a super-system, which would in turn reduce the plural answers to mere psychological or sociological variations on one and the abstract theme. Christianity cannot be reduced to an abstraction. We would then have a mere perspectivism and not take seriously the different opinions. The problem is then simply transferred, for we may equally ask why one perspective is better or broader than another. If the question has many answers involving thinkers, people, saint and plain, who for two millennia have given different interpretations, we have a case of true pluralism. Indeed, if the answer were only objective there would be no contradiction in defending a single true answer, says the Roman Catholic answer. But even then the strictest Roman Catholic answer has changed substantially along the ages, up to the most recent times: we may adduce the excommunications of non-Catholics as a single example. And this very "strict Catholic orthodoxy" forbids to abide by the last official document of the hierarchy which contradicts previous official statements.

In short, the answer has to be a pluralistic answer, but this is not an easy task. It implies embarking on a way of thinking that overcomes the above-mentioned split between objectivity and subjectivity.

I would like to venture a pluralistic approach. Pluralism, by definition, does not admit of a pluralistic "system." Pluralism belongs to the order of the mythos

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Although I go a step further, cf. the enlightening article by Pierre Bühler, "Christian Identity between Objectivity and Subjectivity," *Concilium* 216 (1988): 36–50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> C.f. a standard modern definition: "A Christian is ordinarily defined as 'one who believes in Jesus Christ." He might more adequately be described as one who counts himself as belonging to that community of men for whom Jesus Christ.—his life, words, deeds and destiny—is of supreme importance" (H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1975, 11)).

and not of the logos. We speak of pluralism not when we discover a plurality of possible answers to a problem, but when, while recognizing that these answers may be mutually incompatible, we find we cannot deny their legitimacy given a certain standpoint, albeit one that we cannot accept intellectually. Pluralism is a fact that challenges rational analysis. It allows us to discover our own personal and collective contingency.

In the Eucharistic Congress of Mumbai (Bombay), 1964, after affirming that Christians have no monopoly on goodness, truth, or salvation, I proceeded to describe a Christian as "a conscious collaborator with Christ in the threefold function of creating, redeeming, and glorifying the world." On that occasion I was trying to speak from within the broadly acceptable Christian myth.

We may agree that a Christian is somebody who acknowledges a special relation to Jesus Christ, but the understanding of this relation is not interpreted in any univocal way, and the analogy cannot go beyond the formal or structural contents of the word "relation."

Karl Rahner's efforts to find a general basis for his "Transcendental Christology" depend not only on the post-Kantian and evolutionary mentality of modern Western Man, but also on a maximalist position that many Christians would not accept and would even refuse to acknowledge as being implicit in their "Christian belief." Many would declare themselves Christians without necessarily admitting that Christ is the "absolute Savior" and even without giving Christ a metaphysically central place." A certain type of Christian humanist would consider Christ a great human master of the Western civilization along with others, and would not accept the metaphysical claims of the major orthodox traditions of the past. It is a well-known fact, especially in modern times, that many people, particularly intellectuals, acknowledge Jesus Christ and texplicitly reject Christianity."

At the very outset I should prevent a misunderstanding. I do not minimize in any way the importance of the doctrinal contents of Christian identity, but the history

See Bernard Lonergan, Doerrinal Pluralism (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1971), defending a pluralism of communications and distinguishing a number of necessary differentiations of consciousness; Hant Urs von Balchasar. Die Wahrete ist symphonisch. Aspekte des christilischen Pluralismus (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1972); Davi Pluralism in Theology, and which assumes that there is a "basic meaning of the Christian faith itself" capable of many articulations and symbolic expresentations. The problem then becomes "the pluralism of faith."

<sup>6 &</sup>quot;The absolute Relationship to Jesus Christ in History may have been sufficiently or not sufficiently interpreted in the theological reflection, [bur] its factuality in every single [person] may disappear in the unreflectivity of the last existential decision of the singular Christian: Where it is, is Christianity ... where this Relationship is not accomplished and interpreted, ceases to be actually (explicit) Christianity" (Karl Rahner, Grundkurs des Glaubens [Freiburg: Herder, 1976]), 205.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Rahner, Grundkurs des Glaubens, 204.

<sup>8</sup> Sec the two volumes by Xavier Tilliette, Le Christ et la philosophie (Paris: Cerf, 1990), and Le Christ des philosophes (Namur: Culture et Vérité, 1993).

shows and "sociology of knowledge" highlights that at any given point in time (and, I would add, in space as well) there are prevalent myths that make plausible and even evident doctrines that are contested of forgotten in other times and places. Nor am I denying the role of authority to declare what is orthodox and what is heterodox. This is nor our question. I am approaching the fundamental theological and philosophical problem stated in the title.

### A Thesis by Way of Hypothesis

The problem of human identity is a thorny and thoroughly debated philosophical problem. The question of identity in self-conscious beings entails self-identity. Human identity cannot be satisfied with external marks. It is not just "objective" it has to be self-identity. But it cannot be merely "subjective." of the conscious and somewhat never-ending search for "something": a self or a nonself, which will guarantee the unity or at least the continuity of the person. I say "never-ending" because the question of human identity inevitably leads to the impossible enterprise of individual self-awareness: it is the I asking for its own "L" il But this assumes already an "l" asking for a "me"—supposedly identical to the I Identity is, in the final analysis, not the result of one's particular reflection upon it (self-identity depends on my underlying notion of self'), but the radical fact of that reflection (the myth underlying my "self-consciousness"). Ultimately, our thesis addresses a particular instance of a more general problematic concerning the peculiar nature of human being (Dassin) as distinct from any other entities. I will not, however, pursue this line of inquiry but concentrate rather on our concrete question.

The thesis runs like this: The criterion for Christian identity lies ultimately in the sincere confession of a person, validated by a corresponding recognition of a community.

In other words, the question of Christian identity cannot be solved if it is formulated in the form of "What is a Christian?" or "Who is a Christian?" A Christian is one who both confesses oneself to be such and as such is accepted by a community (usually a Christian one). More pointedly: I am a Christian if I sincerely confess to being one (subjective factor) and am accepted as such by a community (objective element). The point I am making is that Christian identity is an existential fact and nor just an essential feature. Thus, it does not need a perennially fixed context, nor always the same minimum of text (doctrine). Christian identity express itself differently in

See Godfrey Vesey, Personal Identity (London: MacMillan, 1974), and the 122 bibliographical entries of the appendix; and also Paul Ricoeur's Gifford Lectures, 1986: "On Selfhood: The Question of Personal Identity," published afterward as Soi-meme comme un autre (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See Amelie Oksenburg Rorty, ed., *The Identity of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). See also the useful bibliography (325–33).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Das unwissende Bewusstein" in Bewusstein und Person, ed. Gunter Rager and Adrian Holderegger (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 124–44.

different times and places, according precisely to the peculiar self-understanding of both individual and community.

The problem is painfully acute for a Catholic identity that was based for a long on merely objective grounds, probably in order to counterbalance the predominantly subjective Protestant approach. Many a disorientation after Vatican II may have its cause in this fact. What or who is a Catholic? We will approach the question in its Christian generality; the Catholic answer will be just a corollary.

Our thesis affirms that what constitutes Christian identity is the sincere personal confession (Gr.: martyria) that finds a positive resonance in a community. It is neither the mere whim of an individual or group claiming to be "Christian" (if no other individual or group accepts it) nor is it a matter of merely doctrinal statements—neessary as these statements are in any given situation. Nor is there any Christian identity without knowing it. It has to be human self-identity, and therefore conscious.<sup>12</sup>

If I am right in this thesis, the consequences are far reaching indeed. But I shall restrict myself to clarifying this theologoumenon. Before doing so, we will have to reflect a little on the pluralistic situation at the root of our present-day crisis in Christian identity. After analyzing the thesis, I will conclude with some philosophical reflections followed by other, more theological considerations.

### The Pluralistic Genesis

When a single myth hovers almost palpably over a culture, forming-as it were—a horizon in terms of which truth and reality can be defined, there is a little doubt as to who is a Christian and what Christian identity means. Either the question does not arise, so thoroughly the answer is taken for granted, or orthodoxy proclaims itself the undisputed criterion, with all the refinements that theologians may consequently append to the central fact of a universally recognized orthodoxy accepted as a Christian identity. Orthodoxy is considered the true mirror of orthopraxis, which constitutes the practical and existential aspect of religion. In times of unified myth, orthodoxy becomes the crucial criterion, not necessarily due to a Cartesian identification of the true nature of Man with reason, but rather to the lack of differentiation between the doxa and the integral human being. In such a time, orthodoxy is so much taken for granted in its fundamental tenets that a denial of these tenets is seen as tantamount to a denial of plain humanness. The heretic was, and still is, condemned, not because he holds false ideas, but because of the contumacy of existentially persevering in an allegedly dehumanizing—that is, in itself damning-attitude.

Paul Ricoeur makes the fundamental distinction between "identité ipse" and "identité idem." Our constant thesis will be that identity in the sense of ipse does not imply any assertion concerning an assumed unchanging core of the person" (Soi-meme comme un autre, 13). We will deal, of course, with the ipse (I myself) and not with the idem (same).

This is not the modern problem, because Christians recognize different models of hold loti for orthodoxy. Ways of thinking have been disentangled from ways of being. This, of course, has to be defended by all those who hold that "Christianity claims to transcend cultures and find expression in a variety of cultures." This feature has been common since (at least) the schisms of the eleventh and especially the sixteenth centuries. Heresy and apostasy are well-studied phenomena. But today the problem arises mainly because the very conception of orthodoxy does not seem to be sufficient for Christian identity; so polyvalent has it become, and to some so irrelevant, that it offers no common foothold and certainly no criterion of identity. If the ortho-daxia of a particular church has become problematic, that of the sum of the different Christian groups is patently nonexistent. If by an artificial "tour de force" one could extract some rather vague common denominator of all Christian beliefs at a given time, by the next decade there might well appear another "Christian" church that would belie the hypochesis. What the makes a Christian Christian's church that would belie the hypochesis. What the makes a Christian Christian church that would belie the hypochesis. We was the makes a Christian Christian church that would be the model of the control of the con

The question applies with special pungency to Roman Catholicism because the apparently monolithic block of one single doctrine held by 800 million Catholics has collapsed. 17 How can a single person, the supreme pontiff, have *immediate* jurisdiction over almost 1,000 million individuals?

Orthodoxy refers to belief, while faith transcends the doctrinal realm. We distinguish faith as a constitutive human dimension, namely that dimension that keeps us constantly open to a "plus," an "other," or simply to "transcendence," from belief as the articulation of our ultimate convictions. It faith, then, is not a privilege of the Christian, what kind of belief makes a Christian a Christian? It all depends on where

- <sup>13</sup> Amaladoss, Theologizing in India, 52.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. the efforts of Charles Journet in a pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic climate to save the concept of heresy from existential connotations of bad will, sin, evil, etc.: Theologie de l'Eglise (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1957).
- See R. Panikkar "La sécuralisation de l'herméneutique de la secularization," in Herméneutique de la secularization, ed. Enrico Castelli (Paris: Aubier, 1976), 213–48. Now in this Opera Omnia, volume IX, book 2.
- 16 The case of Africa and North America, with new and basically different "Christian" groups every year, could offer us ample evidence of the futility of research along these lines.

  We have to look at the problem differently.
- <sup>17</sup> Bishops Lefebre and Casaldáliga, theologians Balthasar and Sobrino, politicians like Pinochet and Aristide, and priests like the communist Jesuit Llanos and the former president of Notre Dame Hesburgh, women like Dorothy Day and the Duchess of Alba—All belong to the Catholic fold in spite of the most divergent doctrines, attitudes, and ideas. See the intelligent and pathetic defense of the Crusades, the Inquisition, and political power of the Church in Charles Journet, L'Egliet du Verbe incarné, 1–3 (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1941–1969), and The Church of the Word Incarnate (London: Sheed & Ward, 1955), and the public "mea culpa" asking forgiveness for the sins of the Church by Pope John Paul II on occasion of the Jubilee of the Year 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> See the chapter on faith in Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 185–229.

we draw the line at any given point in time and space. The thesis I am proposing affirms that from a doctrinad standpoint there is no absolute and everlasting criterion as to where to put the Christian "boundaries." Life is constant change.

We all know many people roday—but we could as well cire C. G. Jung, B. Russell, C. Coce, A. Gide, or, J. Ortega y Gasses, and also Simone Weil and M. Heidegger (to draw from the European generation immediately preceding our own)—who have declared themselves non-Christians because they are unable to accept what they consider essential to the Christian tradition. P and yet, we could easily adduce followers of all the thinkers just mentioned who declare themselves Christians because they see no contradiction between their own beliefs (often even those of their masters) and the Christian tradition. How to explain such a change?

In point of fact, there are today Christians who believe in the Nicaean Creed, others who reinterpret it in such a way that amounts to not accepting it, and some who straightforwardly reject it as obsolete. People declare themselves Christian Marxists, Christian atheists, Hindu-Christians, and so on, a development unheard of only a few decades ago, Just where is the line to be drawn.

Our thesis is that there is no everlasting doctrinal line to draw. We need only look at history in order to witness the retrieval of the boundaries of orthodoxy. We are beginning to witness in Christianity something that is almost commonplace in some other traditions, notably the Hindu one. A Hindu is not constituted by his or her views or beliefs ("orthodoxy"), but rather by that persons more or less explicit or implicit "confession," by one's practice, and by being accepted by a Hindu community. It is well known that a theist, a deist, a polytheist, an atheist, etc., all can be Hindus without infinding any conflict or contradiction therein.

But, it will be objected, Christianity is not a religion like Hinduism. Nevertheless, there hardly remains a Baptist, a Presbyterian, an "Orthodox," or a "Catholic" who will today contest the propriety of calling Christian those who do not happen to belong to their particular persuasion. Religions are existential facts, not merely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Just a single example: "Why I Am Not a Christian" was Bertrand Russell's lecture in 1927 (reprinted in a collection of his essays—under the same title—by Simon and Schuster, 1957). Russell said there that the word "Christian" is used "in a very loose sense these days." It has not that "full-blooded meaning... as it had in the times of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. "Ye today it can be reduced to a minimum: "You must believe in God and immortality," and second, "you must halve at the very lowest the belief that Christ was, if not divine, at least the best and wisest of men." Russell, then, goes on to prove that he does not believe in God, criticizing the traditional arguments. Regarding Christ, he candidly confesses that he agrees "with Christ a great deal more than the professing Christians do" and that he "could go with Him Jiz'a] much further than most professing Christians and" "Ye he finds "defects in Christ's teaching" and is outraged "that He believed in hell," while he does not feel "that any person who is really profoundly human can believe in evertaing punishment."
It is astonishing today, and significant of the contemporary change, that a man of Russell's moral and intellectual stature could have held such a simplistic idea of Christianity only a few decades ago.

doctrinal systems. This does not deny, I repeat, that at any given time Christian existence "embodies" itself in particular doctrines, intellectual statements, dogmas, rituals, and the like. Let us not forget that the first Christian creeds were called symbols (of the apostles) and not conceptual doctrines.

Who then is a Christian, if the name cannot be given any particular doctrinal content? To go back to a purely ontic, karmic, or metaphysical reality totally independent of our consciousness will not do either. To say, for instance, that every baptized person is a Christian—like anyone born of a Hindu father is a Hindu, or any person born of a Jewish mother is a Jew—that is, to reduce Christian identity to a biological or material fact, even if the fact is deemed to be sacramental, is hardly convincing nowadays. To say this does not necessarily imply to dispute the efficacy of a sacramental act, the power of a meta-biological karman, or the reality of blood relations. All these are valid issues, although perhaps questionable on other grounds. The reason why such an opinion is unacceptable is, first of all, the bare fact that today many undisputed Christians-who will even quote Scripture in their favor-do not accept this opinion. Some may not go so far as affirming that the "baptism of desire" is not (obviously) the desire for baptism, but rather the baptism of any authentic desire. Yet many Christians, after Peter and Paul, would not stifle the work of the Spirit by imposing some sort of Christian circumcision. Baptism is certainly not Christian circumcision (see Ac 15:1ff).

Second—and most important, from our point of view—once we have become aware of the problem, that is, once we raise the very question of Christian identity, a merely material fact will not suffice. If we are to say, continuing our example, that a Christian is a baptized person, then in order to accept this answer we are obliged to interpret it. But in this very interpretation, the ontic fact becomes ontological, and thus subject to a variety of interpretations. In other words, once we ask about Christian identity, this identity can no longer remain a mere fact of which the subject is unaware. Even if this were the answer, consciousness of it has already crept into what was supposed to be a bare fact by those who support this thesis and superimpose it on others.

By stretching—even straining—the meaning of words, we may speak of the identity of a stone, meaning by this its singularity, which may be determined irrespective of however the stone might (per impossible) identify itself. "Per impossible," because, if there were the slightest possibility that the stone could identify itself, then it would be illegitimate to ignore that self-identification. We cannot reduce human identity to such a merely objectifiable characteristic; the stone has singularity but not individuality, specificity but not identity. Identity here implies the individuality of that particular being that recognizes itself for what it believes to be. 30

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See R. Panikkar, "Singularity and Individuality: The Double Principle of Individuation," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 111/112 (1975): 141-66.

### Analysis of the Thesis

The two parts of our thesis mutually condition each other and are, properly speaking, not separable. I could hardly declare myself a Christian if there were no community to make sense of my declaration. And vice versa, no sociological group could have any meaningful idea of what a Christian might be if there were nobody who sincerely declares to be such. For the sake of analysis, however, we will have to treat one assect at a time.

### The Christian Confession

Christian identity is a personal caregory. It is not primarily a tag applied to an idea, to a culture, or to anything else; it is the confession of a person. If the designation is applied to other things, this is done analogously and subsequently to the Christian identity of a person. I may hold that Christian politics is incompatible with war, and I may quote Christian Sorpiers and examples in my favor, but other Christians may be of a different opinion and also adduce holy texts and Christian examples on their side. The hotly debated issue of some decades ago about "Christian philosophy" betrayed the underlying crisis of Christian personal identity.

We may leave aside the issue of an "anonymous Christianity," because this depends utterly upon whether we understand by Christianity an ontological, metahistorical fact or a historic-religious fact. I submit that the category of anonymous Christians cannot properly be applied to the problem of Christian identity." I Christian identity is a personal category, and thus it is also a conscious one. Even in the case of little children being baptized, it is the vow of the godparents that is supposed to stand for the community's guarantee of the infant's implied intention. My own free confession of being a Christian. The entire history of Christianity would fall apart if the Christian confession were not necessary to Christianity would fall apart if the Christian confession were not necessary to Christian identity. Not only would marrys and confessors, heretics and schismatics, persecutors and persecuted become meaning-less, but the entire Christian fact would be reduced to an amorphous and confused turmol caused by certain historical groups over the past twenty centuries.

I have inserted the word "sincere" into the thesis for obvious reasons. I assume that there is no conscious fraud, no intention to lie, but rather the expression of one's deepest and most intimate conviction. I assume that, if I confess myself to be a Christian, I believe myself to be one. I assume, further, that we are dealing here with normal human beings, so I exclude the extreme possibility that I might sincerely declare myself the King of El Dorado and be hailed as such by some group of mad fellows.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Karl Rahner, "Die anonymen Christen," in Schriffen zur Theologie (Einsiedeln: Benzinger: 1965), 6:545–54. The first time, to my knowledge, thar Rahner spoke about it was in a conference in 1961 (see Schriffen zur Theologie [1967], 8:187–212).

I am well aware of the ontological understanding of the Christian fact, according to which the sacramental power works even on the unconscious level. From St. Augustine's dispute with the Donatists up to Graham Greene's more recent descriptions of the inner workings of an ontologically present and psychologically unconscious grace, an entire tradition stands for the relative independence of the opus operatum—otherist (which is the proper theological understanding of the opus operatum—otherwise it would be magic). I personally believe that the Christian fact, like any authentic religious belief, is grafted onto the metahistorical core of the person, but all this in no way contradicts the affirmation that Christian identity implies a free consciousness of it. We may have Christian character, Christian culture, Christian grace, and so on, but personal identity presupposes the consciousness that affirms and recognizes itself for what it claims to be. Can we identify human beings only from the exterior as we identify geological strata?

"Christian identity," if it is to have any meaning qua identity, means that in our self-consciousness the name "Christian" denotes an appropriate view of our self-understanding. In other words, the affirmation of Christian identity cannot be separated from the consciousness that affirms it. Can I meaningfully and legitimately be called a Christian if I deny myself to be one?

It could be recorted that one does not need to know that one is a Christian in order to be one: an adult, for instance, who was baptized as a child and does not know it. I have theological difficulties for accepting such a hypothesis; yet, even accepting the "story," that adult might be a Christian (for those who have such a magic idea of the sacramental opus operatum), but this naked fact is not Christian identity.

I may be wrong in affirming that "I am a Christian," but without confessing it, without being aware of it, I can certainly not speak of my Christian identity. If I am wrong, I should be proven wrong according to criteria accepted in common by myself and those who argue the contrary. If we do not agree in the criteria, we may then have two different understandings of the word "Christian," and unless otherwise murually recognized, there is no higher criterion or further instance to which we may appeal.

Here the judgment of dialectics may prove final—that is, we may both cling to our respective criteria until one of us finds the other guilty of self-contradiction or incoherence.

The Christian confession is also of capital importance in recognizing and accepting the reciprocal character of human communication; the declarations and opinions of the other must be treated on a par with our own (or our group's) opinion. The dialectical approach is inapplicable here. The dialectical method is too impersonal and assumes from the start a contradictory position. It recognizes only the principle of noncontradiction as its final court of appeal; it assumes that Being follows the laws of thinking, and that thinking is exclusively dialectical. Here the dialogical method becomes imperative. <sup>22</sup> Dialogue is based on confidence in the other qua

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See my reflections in Joseph Prabhu, The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Pannikar (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 247–62.

alter, and not only insofar as I can understand or co-opt the other. In the dialogue we trust each other, not only the teritum quid of our impersonal rationality. We are now entering the second part of the thesis.

### The Community's Acceptance

I can scarcely be identified as a Christian if I do not recognize myself as one. This first part of the thesis is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. My confession must find a positive echo in a human group. The word "Christian," as I use it, must have meaning for others besides me. A purely private interpretation, like any private language, not only defeats is purpose, which is to communicate, but destroys its very nature, which is relational. If I were to insist on calling myself Christian in a way that nobody finds acceptable. I should strive to prove convincingly (to others) that the adjective "Christian" applies also to me. In other words, if I were to claim the name "Christian" in a way that seems strange to others (cf. the case of Paul), then I will have to convince them that my understanding is not wrong, and it is at least compatible with, if not implied in theirs. In order to do this, I shall have to base my arguments on certain criteria acceptable at large by my fellow Man. Pure equivocation would serve no purpose, for in such a case my "Christian identity" would have a meaning totally different from any other use of the word, which amounts to declaring that I am not a Christian in the series in which the word is understood by all the others.

We ought to recall the classic discussions on the nature of Christianity, which seem to be normative for the question of Christian identity. Here it would be the place to discuss the different criteria that have existed down the ages, still exist today, and that make it possible for one to be considered a Christian.

Let us recall that ex-communication is an exclusion from the community, that is, an annulment of the second condition (recognition by a community) only from a legal point of view, stipulated by the hierarchy of a community or by an entire community, as a punishment of the culprit and for the welfare of the particular community. In no way does the excommunication imply that the excommunicated is not a Christian. It says only that the excommunicated is a bad Christian, and for this is censured by exclusion from the communion of the faithful.<sup>23</sup>

Ever since Romano Guardini's epoch-making study, The Essence of Christianity, 24 which could be considered as a certain climax in the problematic set in motion since Adolf von Harnack, 25 the perennial search for Christian self-understanding has been

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The classic definition of excommunication runs, "censura qua quis privatur ecclesi-astica communione fidelium," and practically all commentaries agree that "non repugnat ut excommunicatus sit in statu gratiae sanctificantis et post mortem in regno coeli"; see D. M. Prümmer, Manuale Theologiae Monalis (Freiburg: Herder, 1940), 3:359.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Romano Guardini, Das Wesen des Chrisentums (Würzburg: Werkbund, 1938).

Adolf von Harnack, Das Wesen des Christentums (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1900; English ed.: What Is Christianity? [New York: Harper and Row, 1957]).

situated not on the doctrinal level but on the existential. The "person" of Jesus Christ (and not His teaching or any idea) is the essence of Christianity. So Or, avoiding the concept "person," we find the symbol Christ at the very center of Christian identity. Hans Küng's book is a study of modern Man's criteria for "being Christian," that is, for Christian identity, and the very success of the book underscores the vitality of the issue. So

What we find, following this line of research, is the effort of thinkers and theologians to reformulate what they consider to be a Christian, employing all the hermeneutic tools at their disposal at a given moment and in a given cultural setting. Today's answers must be clearly discerned and evaluated on their own merits. I will give later on my understanding of my own Catholic identity; but our problem is not how I may give a convincing answer hie et hune, but attempt at a genuine 'fundamental-theological' consideration.

We are not going to discuss the contemporary opinions on the essence of Christianity. Valid and convincing as these may be, they are answers and—legitimately—Christian answers within the cultural and religious field of the modern plurality of views. Our question is the general one about the principles on which Christian identity is based. There are Christians who belong to diverse cultural and religious matrices, and a complete answer to the question will have to be rethought over against this wider context of religious and cultural pluralism.

By way of example, let us recall one case: Keshub Chunder [Sundar] Sen, the great leader of the Brahmo Samaj as an exponent of the Bengali renaissance of the last century, had written movingly about Christ; and a man like Max Müller could assure him that there was nothing non-Christian in the Samaj, so that he even encouraged Sen's successor Protap Chunder Mozoomdar [Pratab Sunder Mazumdar] to declare the entire Samaj as Christian without caring for affiliation with any established Christian church.<sup>28</sup> Yer, "Why is it that, though I do not take the name of Christian, I still persevere in offering my hearty thanksgiving to Jesus Christ?" asked Sen in 1875. "A wholesale acceptance of the Christian name by the Brahmo Samaj," wrote Mozoomdar to Müller, "is neither possible nor desirable, within measurable time."

They "were" Christians for Max Müller. Yet the spirit of the times some one century ago made impossible both the confession of being a Christian and the acceptance of it by any group. None of the parties were ready for it. It would have been a mere lie and not a genuine name, a real word. Neither the confession nor the acceptance is left to the whims of somebody. They would not have been accepted; they could not make such a claim (of being Christians). This is the power of myth.

<sup>26 &</sup>quot;Christus ist nicht Zentrum, sondern Mittler; Gesendeter und Heimholender; Weg, Wahrheit und Leben" (Christ is not the center but rather the Mediator; the Envoy and the Guide; the Way, and Truth, and Life) (Guardini, Das Wesen des Christentums, 85).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Hans Küng, Christ Sein (München/Zürich: Piper, 1974), passim and esp. 531ff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> See for a brief summary of the correspondence and the problem, Nirad C. Chaudury, Scholar Extraordinary (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1974), 330ff.

Another example is that of Mahātma Gandhi. The Christian influence on Gandhi was great.<sup>23</sup> He was confronted by Christians and deeply moved by the figure of Jesus Christ. Yet he did not join Christianity: "If then I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say: Oh yes, I am a Christian." Our first condition is fulfilled. But he then goes on to say. "But I know that, at the present moment, if I said any such thing, I would lay myself open to the gravest misinterpretation." ""

It is just this problematic that leads me to add the two following sections.

### Philosophical Reflections

Let us imagine that a certain Christian group or individual has the criterion m, and similarly o and p are other such criteria held by different groups. A criterion of criteria is not ascertainable if there are mutual contradictions among the particular criteria. In other words, if m, m, o, and p are mutually incompatible, there can be no common criterion. We could still think of a purely formal common denominator x, and say, for instance, that the criterion underlying all criteria is the bare reference to Christ without ever specifying what that word means or how its centrality is envisaged. But that z would satisfy nobody, and such a criterion for being a Christian because, unlike m, and so on, it is not recognized as a sufficient criterion by anybody. We do not even know where the limits of such a criterion would lie. In fact, z could be common not only to m, m, and so on, but also to other groups that do not even taint to be Christian. Hence it is not a criterion would lie. In fact, z could be common not only to m, m, and so on, but also to other groups that do not even claim to be Christian. Hence it is not a criterion to

It may clarify the issue if, instead of casting about for criteria, we try to understand what identity might possibly mean.

### Two Ways of Thinking about Identity

The identity of a thing can be determined in two different ways, according to the bent of one's thinking. If we apply a kind of thinking based on the primacy of the principle of inneonradiction, we will reach the notion of the identity of a thing by defining the differences between that particular thing and the rest of the world. Entity A is all the more what it is the more it is not Non-A. This is the active mode of defining identity. Here identity leads to, and is reached through, differentiation. Christian identity will accordingly be seen in terms of its specific difference over against a generalized "non-Christian" identity, meaning all the rest of morats. Every

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See M. K. Gandhi, What Jesus Means to Me, comp. Ramadas K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1959).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964), 24. The text is from 1927.

attempt at defining Christian identity will be geared to discovering those features that are different, separate, and allegedly "unique" in the Christian tradition or in the Christian self-understanding. Christian mysticism will thus be labeled as "supernatural" in contradistinction to "natural" mysticisms, "Christian grace is unique," "only Christians will possess the fullness of revelation," and so forth.

Nowadays, when the "supernatural" is in crisis and the humanum (as a more qualisticessor to the waning "humanism") takes precedence, Christian identity will strive to distinguish itself from any other way to understand the human and attain full humanity. And since we are today also under the sway of the democratic-egalitarian myth, the point will be to find something specifically Christian that need not necessarily offend others by calling itself better or superior. It will only be "distinctive." Typical of this enterprise are the present-day theological reflections that try to sort out Christian identity in the field of world religions. If an Absolutbeitsanspruch? cannot be defended, where does Christian identity lie? What kind of uniqueness? No

If the difference is not one of exclusivity or superiority, it has to be a historical difference. The Western Christian myth of history provides the horizon for almost all the answers focused along this line of thought. The Christian belongs to a particular historical period, with all that this implies: historical mission, historical consciousness, historical identity, Jesus Christ becomes then fundamentally a historical symbol. There is only one (historical) Jesus of Nazareth. History is the matrix of reality. And in that history Jesus has performed a unique role that is different from all the other "manifestations" of the "divine." Christian identity implies belonging to a particular historical people. In a very uncritical, although well-meaning way, Vatican II calls Christians "the people of God." What about the others?

Basically different is the way of thinking that relies on the principle of identity to identify an entity. In this case, A is all the more A (its identity is all the more perfect) the more it is A. Linguistic analysis is also familiar with the logical paradox that, if we do not recognize degrees of identity, any analysis is either contradictory or banal. If the analysandum is identical to the analysans, there is no new information conveyed, no gain in knowledge, and thus the analysis is banal. But if they are not identical, the analysis is false, for then the analysans would not express the analysandum. All this has led me to speak elsewhere of ontological principles as qualified tautologies.

In any event, identity in this view is not based on difference but on unity. Thus Christian identity does not need to be seen in contrast with non-Christian identity, although it is almost meaningless to speak of a "non-Christian" identity, since it all depends on the notion of "Christian identity." The identity of the "non-Christian" should lie in something that the non-Christian is, and not in what it is not. A Christian can be Christian without having to distinguish oneself in a contradic-

<sup>31</sup> See Küng, Christ Sein, 520ff., for a careful dialectic between Menschsein and Christsein.

<sup>32</sup> Claim to absoluteness

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> See the success of the very title of the book by John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., The Myth of Christian Uniqueness (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

tory way from a non-Christian, simply because the core of one's own identity does not lie in any external distinctive criterion. On the contrary, it lies in the internal consciousness of one's own being, which is not threatened by communion or even "fusion" with "others."34

This is related to what I have called, in a polemic mood, the "classificatory mania" of the West, schematized by Aristotle, hallowed by Porphyrios, and consecrated by modern sciences. The principle of noncontradiction is here paramount. But, as I have argued elsewhere, the classifier cannot enter into the classification. Christian identity is not a label in a classification. It is personal identity, and personal identity belongs to the classifier. It is unclassifiable.

This being the case, the question of Christian identity cannot be appropriately approached on the merely doctrinal level, which would imprison it within one particular mode of thinking or one particular culture. We have to look for something more basic than doctrinal differences—important and inescapable as these are, given a particular field of intelligibility.

### The Nonobjectifiable Nature of Self-Identity

Christian identity cannot be segregated from the self-identity of Christians. To do otherwise would imply that "our" group takes upon itself the prerogative of defining and deciding for everyone who is a Christian. Even this fact of appointing ourselves as judges of the Christian identity would not obviate the difficulty. In fact, in order that our "magisterial" decision of deciding who is and who is not Christian be intelligible to others, it would have to pass through the others' understanding, interpretation, and acceptance of it. This is but one special case of a more general problematic affecting all human self-affirmations, and bound up precisely with pluralism.

We are so imbued with modern scientific thought that we are prone to judge scientifically and "objectively" facts and events that belong to another order. Not even the worst inquisitorial times would dare to judge who a Catholic is. The condemnation of the heretic was a political and juridical act, not a decision on Catholic identity: de internis non iudicat ecclesia. But I will restrict myself to our case by going back to our example of the stone. If I affirm, "This is a stone," we can easily agree by appealing to the (qualified and critically checked) testimony of our senses. One thing, however, is clear: in our prevalent scientific cosmology, at no point has the stone anything to say for itself. The affirmation, "This is a Christian," by contrast, does not allow the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> I could personally feel the difficulty of taking such an approach when, four decades ago, I began to express my identity as both Christian and Hindu without celectic or syncretistic confusion. "If you are a Christian," I was constantly told, 'you are not Hindu." "If I am a Christian," I retorted, "I am certainly not a non-Christian." Between a Hindu and a Christian there may be opposition, but not necessarily contradiction. Even Aristotelian logic is on my side.

same ultimate recourse to such independent and critical perception, because the self-understanding of the one "who is a Christian" belongs also to the problem itself. The judgment about who is a Christian does not depend only on our examination of some objectifiable "thing," as is the case with the stone: it depends as well on the one who is being examined. And the examination of a conscious being entails also asking what and how he or she examines him- or herefal.

We may agree that the word—"Christian" in our case—has a meaning and that it has the same referent for all; yet this is patently not enough. Let us assume that, according to my understanding, a South African white citizen is nor a Christian because that person does not believe in the basic Trinitarian structure of the Nicaean Creed and accepts (or accepted) apartheid—while, according to that citizen, this belief is not at all necessary in order to be a Christian. We may go on ad nauseam debating where to draw the dividing line, but there is no superior reason—if we do not accept it—that could decide the question for us. In short, when a human identity is in question, the self-understanding of the subject of inquiry belongs to the very nature of the subject to be understood. I have to treat you as a source of self-understanding, and with the same respect I accord to myself, even if I can neither agree with you nor understand why you take the stand you take. This is pluralism: acceptance of the other's opinion (as issuing from another source of understanding) that is incompatible with my own.

In philosophical parlance: your self-understanding belongs to you as you and a posteriori not only as yours, so that, in order to understand you, I have somehow to grasp how you understand your-self. In order to say in truth who you are (your identity) I also have to integrate in my saying who you think and believe you are.

We cannot bypass this first step of respecting and accepting what we may neither understrand nor agree upon. In order to do it reasonably, we have to make the assumption that the others are sources of intelligence, as much as we are, and thus that the others are equally entitled to their opinion, although we may find it wrong and try to convince them of their "error"—or even fight them as "evil." But meanwhile, that is, until we do not reach agreement, we will have to trust in something other and greater than our personal insights—greater even than the faint "hope" that we may one day convince them, for such an expectation may easily prove to be in vain. True pluralistic tolerance is more than the strategic expectation of a future victory.

My point here is that to rely only on our own criteria for deciding such an issue implies an abuse of power, unwarranted by the nature of the problem itself. For centuries, Christian identity has been a political problem. Tolerance is not just a lesser evil, but a mystical virtue. The problems loom large. Why is the modern West more inclined to tolerate "error" than "evil"? Heretics are not imprisoned; lawbreakers are.

Whatever this may be, we should pursue our search as far as possible. Although we may reach some conclusion for "the time being," as long as "Being is in time," the problem cannot be considered closed: a third opinion might well shatter all our past agreements. It is also this reflection that leads me to formulate the question of identity in terms of function and not of content.

#### Theological Considerations

### The Categorical and the Transcendental Christian Identity

Since its inception, Christian thought has approached Christian affirmations or, traditionally speaking, Christian revelation, in two divergent moods: the one focuses on the cognitive meaning or the intellectual content of the affirmation, and the other concentrates on its referent, its intentionality or intentional function. The first is a theoretical or doctrinal approach; the second a pastoral or practical approach. The former is proper to councils and schools, the latter to the parish and ordinary life. The first is sensitive to the essence of truth, the second to its existence.

To say that the word "Christian" has many meanings (according to different groups) but notly one referent does not resolve the question, but only shifts it. Who then is this referent to which people refer with different meanings? If what a Christian is seems polysemous, who a Christian is seems polysemous, who a Christian is must remain an unanswered question as long as we take a solely doctrinal approach to it.

I may call the two approaches the categorical and the transcendental one. The categorical approach focuses on the doctrinal statements: it means what it says. The transcendental approach concentrates on the intentional symbol: it says what it means. In the last analysis, both are required: we say what we mean, because we mean what we say. The category is a translation of a transcendental situation; the transcendental needs a particular category for its expression. I will describe them briefly.

### Categorical Identity

We may introduce the issue by a sociological rather than a theological consideration. There are today many Catholics who have decided to cease calling themselves "Catholic" because they do not agree with either the doctrine or the praxis of the official Catholic Church. They consider their own identity incompatible with such teachings or practices and make it "a question of conscience" to clear out from such company. They believed that Christian tenets were supposed to embody the truth. Once they discovered that they could no longer accept those tenets, they felt duty-bound, out of loyalry, honesty, and truthfulness to themselves and others, to take their leave from the Catholic community. The gamue of reasons is immense, from ceasing to believe in the Trinity to disagreement over the economics or politics of the Vatican, from Marxist leanings to disgust over birth-control interdict, disagreement with the current pope, and so forth.

If these people do not consider themselves Catholic, or Christian for that matter, we may well say that it is due to a fundamentalist interpretation of what it means to

be a Catholic, or a Christian. We may still believe they are Christians, but we have no right to call them so in spite of and against their will. You may burn your North American passport and refuse to go to the Gulf to wage war, but the US government will imprison and punish so-called army deserters. Whatever abuse of power it may entail to subject yourself to the laws of a state for having been born within certain geographical boundaries, the fact of being reborn a Christian is neither a biological fact nor a merely juridical action that you can delete by burning your baptismal certificate. The entite theology of the sacraments hinges on that point. The fact is that a good number of Catholies have denied their Catholie identity because of the above motives.

In this first case, Catholic identity is delectable sociologically and historically. A Catholic is someone appertaining to a particular and univocally recognizable group of people. The problem of identity, seen from the outside, would then lie in their membership, which is an empirically recognizable fact. And they will willingly consider themselves outside the church. Voluntary apostasy is a well-studied phenomenon.

Without going back to the Middle Ages or the modernist crisis, one hears in our present times the comments of people who say they would not have broken with the church if they would have known of the coming Vatican II. What an attitude does it entail to want to remain in the fold while expecting that things will move on and change? This is linked with the much-vexed question concerning the evolution of Christian doctrine.

Now, within the categorical framework, the problem is not solved by reverting to the evolution of Christian self-understanding. One cannot console the impatient by telling them to wait since heresy today may become an accepted doctrine tomorrow, because this evolution is detectable only a posteriori. This "evolution" is the gift of the Spirit and not the conclusion of a syllogism. Besides, this artitude would berray a mere opportunistic membership in the church: a comfortable community as long as we find advantages in it.

I am speaking all the time about the profound problem of the search for one's omidenticy. If I reject my Catholic identicy, it is not because, while abhorring the Inquisition or the lack of women's rights in the church, I expect things will change. It is because I consider that such doctrines or practices are radically incompatible with my experience of Truth or the mystery of Reality. We cannot console ourselves with vain expectations. At any given time we cannot foresee, much less predict, what evolutionary path Christian self-consciousness is going to take. We may certainly pay attention to the signs of the times and (perhaps sociologically) predict a few trends of thought, because the seeds of these future tendencies are already stirring in our present situation. We may envision what North American Christians are going to say, or what stand they are going to take in the coming decade, but we cannot possibly yet know what impact African Christians may one day have on the entire Christian self-understanding, or whether "Hindu-Christians" are going to succeed in breaking the Semitic and Old Testament paradigm within the Christian community itself. The point I am making is that no Laplacean spirit or theoretically perfect computer

can ever predict the dynamism of the human spirit in its quest forward. By the same token, no one can have an exhaustive understanding of Christian identity. Identity has much deeper roots. We do not know the happiness of a person until we know the entire life of that person, Aristotle has already said.<sup>38</sup>

We are here dealing with the Christian face as a case in point of an issue that concerns the very nature of reality itself: the problem of what "in face" a fact is. Facts are not merely actualizations of possible potentialities. They are, first of all, real events. They present a radical novelty, not necessarily foresceable or even thinkable (as real possibilities) for human consciousness at a given point in time and space. To stay with recognized Christian "facts": what a Paul, a Constantine, a Gregory Palamas, a Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, or John XXIII have made possible in Christian consciousness does not result from mere conclusions of syllogism or deductions of previous facts. Rather, those "facts" presented themselves as utopias in their time. They were events breaking into the framework of reasonably foresceable facts. Only a posterior can it be seen that they maintained a certain continuity with previous Christian self-interpretations. This continuity, as our thesis coherently affirms, is only a historical continuity, an existential succession, and not a necessarily rational mor. The Spirite blows where, when, and how she will; ber ways are not our ways.

There is no possibility of having "deduced" that from the Sermon on the Mount, and the Gospels in general could not have derived Crusades, Inquisitions, and capitalism. I am saying that a sociology of the Christian community may be a necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for describing Christian identity. I am saying even more: I maintain that this degree of freedom (even from logical constraints) is constitutive of reality.

In other words, if even the most elementary movements of matter itself show a radical indeterminacy. I assume that the movement of the Spirit will never be quite reducible to rational laws. The "expansion" of the real universe is more than just an unfolding from a given point, be it material, logical, or spiritual; the radical novelty of creation does not belong only to the past. It is a creatio continua, as the Scholastics maintained. Christian identity can be no more fixed or guaranteed immutability once and for all than anything else in our relative universe.

Categorical identity goes as far as it goes, and it serves a purpose as long as nobody changes the given and accepted notion: "A Christian is one who believes in the Nicaean Creed, in the Augsburgian Confession, in the divinity of Christ," or the like. But the Christian identity crisis arises the moment that the particular myth is, for one reason or another, no longer accepted or found acceptable. Within a homogeneous myth, Christian identity has an accepted content, like what a Christian attitude represents. I do not think present-day Christian conscience would condone slavery as an institution, but I wonder if future Christians will not ask themselves how twenty-first-century Christians could condone capitalism as an institution.

<sup>35</sup> Nicomachean Ethics I.10 (1100a10-1100b10).

### Transcendental Identity

In the second case, we have the awareness of a transcendental identity, that is, the awareness that any caregorical formulation is nothing but a crystallization of an ever elusive and never exhaustive manifestation of a Reality that transcends every human attempt to pinpoint it.

This other approach reacts to conflict in exactly the opposite manner. It clings to Christian identity because what matters is not some theoretical content or any contingent practical artitude, but rather the trust that the truth is expressed in Christian tenets, and not that Christian tenets are the truth. So, if truth proves to be elsewhere, then, by definition, the Christian tenets will go there. The oldest formulation of this artitude—after a similar Buddhist one—may be that of St. Justin in the second century, affirming that "whatever sublime things have been said by anyone belong to Christians," probably echoing the words of Paul: "Everything is yours" (1 Co 3:22). We find the same mood in St. Ambrose of Milan, quoted and endorsed by Thomas Aquinas when he affirms that whatever truth is ever uttered comes from the Holy Spirit."

Modern theologian's will sympathize, of course, with the apparently broader idea standing for truth, wherever it may be. 

\*\*But the problem is not so easily solved, for two reasons: first, no truth is totally independent of our understanding of it, and thus of our formulation, so that we cannot completely disentangle the one from the other. Second, if every truth is a Christian truth—that is, if the adjective "Christian" really is no adjective because it does not add anything—then, Christian identity means merely genuine human identity: I confess myself a Christian because I acknowledge myself as truly human.

In this case, Christian identity is either devoid of any specific meaning, for it coalesces with humanness, or it can have any meaning whatsoever, without restric-

Meque (Quaecumque igitur apud alios omnes praeclare dicta, ea nostra sunt," Christianorum Apologia II.13 (PG 6.466). This dictum has been also exploited in the opposite direction by an imperialistic mentality: the whole truth is "ours"—instead of "we stand wherever truth is."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Sr. Thomas quotes this text with certain predilection and knows its source, relating it also to St. Pauls see also Ambrosiaster, I.Ors. XILI 3 (PL 17.245b); "Omne verum, a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est" (Sum. theel., I-II, q.109, a. I., in corp). In ad 1 he adds an important thought: "Onne verum, a quocumque dicatur, est a Spiritu Sancto sicut ab infundente naturale lumen, et movente ad intelligendum et loquendum veritatem" (very true senence, by whoever is enunciated, comes from the Holy Spirit as from a natural light instilling it, and leading [Man] towards the understanding and expression of truth).

<sup>38</sup> See David Tracy's statement concerning "the truth that Christianity taught," namely, "that one's fundamental Christian and human commitment is to value of truth wherever it may lead and to that limit-transformation of all values signalized by the Christian demand for agapic love" (Blessed Rage for Order, 135). We may remember the Christian criticism of Gandhi's inversion: not God is the Truth, but "Truth is God" (Satyagraha: Non-Violent Resistance (Ahmedabad: Navjiyan, 1951). 38).

tion, for anybody could say that the individual understanding of the transcendental Christian identity is best expressed by his or her own particular formulation. If there is truth in Buddhism, Buddhists are thus bound to be anonymous Christians.

In either case, the remedy seems worse than the malady, since it creates more problems than it solves. Our thesis, on the contrary, says that Christian identity is a concrete identity, although neither fixed once and for all, nor left to the private interpetation of the individual. Christian identity consists rather in the dialogical interaction between a sincere confession and a collective recognition, according to criteria considered valid at each particular juncture. It then falls to the history of theology to seek an underlying intelligibility in the series of statements affirming Christian identity—and my suspicion is that there is no other one than the existential continuity that I would like to call apostolic or historical succession. I am affirming that history in general and Christian historical continuity in particular are neither dialectical materialism, nor dialectical historicism, spiritural as this latter may be conceived.

An important point should be made here. We should not minimize the value of history, but we should not absolutize history either. Christianity is undoubtedly a historical religion, but the transcendental Christian identity is not reduced to a merely historical fact. If we destroy the mystical core of human religiousness, we reduce religion to a historical fact, and "theology" to an ideology. This leads me to a final consideration.

### The Nature of Christian Identity

With all the provisos deriving from the foregoing, we should be able to formulate a relatively satisfactory answer to this question for our time and place. This is what I may attempt, by reformulating the categorical statements that translate the transcendental interpretation of Christian identity for our times. Christian identity is a categorical identity that translates into a particular historical framework that I have called *transcendental identity*.

Unless we are to fall prey to mere semantics, a Christian, according to an understanding that would encompass every self-declared Christian today, is a person who meaningfully (for him- or herself and his or her community) confesses him- or herself to be such. This confession and recognition may bic et nune take approximately the following form:

A Christian is someone for whom the Christ-symbol discloses or illumines or, in one way or another, touches the central mystery of one's own existence. A Christian believes that the Christ-symbol (with all the polysemy and polymorphy proper to a symbol, as distinct from a concept) reveals, expresses, or manifests something apperaining to the very core of the Real in general, and of one's existence in particular.

Of this belief the Christian finds an echo and confirmation in a community. Individual Christians and Christian community imply each other. The individual's confession presupposes an understanding of what a Christian is. The individual

perceives "what is Christian" in a community. What we perceive is not a doctrine but a life, a practice, a liturgy in the broadest but also a deepest sense of the word leti-oungia (an regon, a work of the lass, people). The community is the keeper of the symbols and gestures that give meaning to the name "Christian." It is not just doctrinal accuracy but the individual's adhesion to the life and symbols of the community that constitutes Christian identity.

Today, when there are not only many communities, but their number keeps increasing not only in churches or groups but also in communities of theologians or active movements—today, when the very idea of a universally valid and necessary doctrinal content is becoming more and more problematic—this traditional truth, that the Christian identity depends on one's own witness, marryria, acquires greater clarity and relevance. A marry is always a witness for somebody.

The assumption I am making is that the nature of being a Christian is not detectable as a physical reality, but only knowable as a human fact. In other terms, as Indic logicians have known since ancient times, "fool's gold" is an illusion precisely because it is not gold; it only appears to be gold. But there are objective means to assay the worth of true gold. Just so, in assaying Christian identity we cannot bypass the testimony of both the alleged Christian and the community.

History, past and present, shows us that some Christian groups will not recognize as Christian other individuals or communities. The issue here is whether the fact that different communities hold to different criteria contradicts our thesis or, on the contrary, illumines it from an unsuspected angle.

If we have different groups proclaiming certain minimal conditions for being a Christian, and thus if we find some communities considered "Christian" according to one criterion and "non-Christian" according to another, this means that, unless we share the opinion of one of the parties, our thesis uses the word "Christian" to denote different understandings of what or who is a Christian. From a phenomenological point of view, we may be in a quandary if we try to ascertain the noēma proper to being a Christian, but we may solve the difficulty if we introduce the notion of pisteuma: the belief of the believer as belonging to the phenomenon itself. The pisteuma is neither merely subjective (it has to be recognized as such) nor purely objective (I have to believe in it). A by-product of Christian ecumenism is the aperture in Christian identity. If Catholics today consider also Christian those who until now were considered apostates and perhaps even non-Christian, they can no longer brand as non-Catholics those who do not hold the same idea of Catholicity. Küng, Boff, Curran, Bermejo, to put forth living examples from four continents, may be "punished," but they cannot be called non-Catholics: their Catholic identity is not at stake.

But there is still more to this apparent proliferation of meanings for one and the same symbol. It shows the continuing vitality of the symbol and reveals something about its very nature, namely that it is an important symbol that cannot easily be discarded, because so many different groups claim to have the correct understanding of it, instead of just giving it up and using another name altogether, if need be. This makes obvious the power of the symbols itself, and suggests that Christian identity is not the same as belonging to some arbitrary social group, like membership in a club. Why such a covered symbol? Why do people with such divergent opinions insist on their right to use this name?<sup>39</sup>

Is a merely cultural answer enough? Why are Christians the antiliberals of one era and the liberals of the next? Why do some Marxists nowadays want to be Christian or for that matter, some Christians (who do not wish to cease being Christian) want to be Marxists, or atheists, or the like? What kind of dynamism is detectable here? Christian identity in a time of pluralism seems to reveal another, hidden facet of the problem. It seems to illumine a peculiar aspect of reality (call it a need of the human being, or a feature of human history, or a moment in the divine economy): the need of continuity, of rootedness, for Man, which is not merely cultural or biological or ethnic. Dut also religious.

#### Conclusion

Modern Western culture by and large, Christian philosophers and theologians being no exception, almost panics at losing one's own distinctive singularity. The fear of pantheism, "oriental" confusion, intellectual chaos, and ultimately of individual death are very heterogeneous names for a rather homogeneous attitude. The will to preserve separate identity is also tied with the will to power and the preoccupation (not to say almost obsession) both for certainty on the intellectual level and security in the political sphere.

No wonder that the words of Christ about losing one's own life<sup>40</sup> have most often been interpreted *cum grano salis*: "an oriental exaggeration"—obviously.

This would be my gloss: to take more seriously and more literately that our life is not private property; that our main task is not be concerned with ourselves (Mt 6:19-34); and, on the contrary, to be carefree (1 Co 7:32) and without worries (Mt 6:25), not only regarding how we will eat and clothe ourselves, but also concerning our own identity (Mt 6:3). I would, paradoxically, submit that the mature Christian identity is the discovery of the existential Christian contradiction of such an identity. "Load, when did we see you hungry ... thirsty ... a stranger, or naked ...?" (Mt 25:37ff.). Neither those on the right side nor those on the left had identified (recognized) Christ. Why do we worry about Christian identity? Only by letting it go may it be bestowed upon us.

This seems to be a great intuition—should I say revelation?—of the Rg-veda (1.164.37):

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> A pungent example: A well-known Spanish lay theologian was recently called by his bishop, who, after congranulating him on his theological contributions, asked him not to say that he was a Catholic theologian, since his opinions differed so widely from the statements of the hierarchy.

<sup>40</sup> Mt 10:39 and parallel texts.

What I am, I do not know; I wander secluded, burdened by the mind. When the First-born of truth comes, I partake in the same Logos.

Christian identity is the trust that we are known and loved, and do not care unduly about ourselves, because our identity is to be identified with the Firstborn of the course.

Not much later than the quoted text of the Ig-veda, the Sibyl at Delphi uttered another oracle complementary to the Vedic mantra, and which has shaped Western mentality: "Know yourself:"

Indeed, according to Plato and repeated by the Christian tradition and the Qur'an, to know oneself is to know God. But when the sacred injunction becomes a profane statement, the human being is at a loss. Here begins the "crisis of identity" about which modern philosophers speak. "I Having severed the "you" from the "self," modern Man clings to the ego, and under this influence the Christian worries about one's own identity and forgets not only Christ's words, but also Plotinus's wisdom: let it all be, eliminate everything, cut away all. Now in the strong words of John (12:25): "The Man who loves himself is lost" (he who loves his life will lose it). The worry about identity may turn pathological. . . .

When all this is said and done, as I am myself not outside my own horizon, I may be allowed to express what it does all mean for me.

To be a Catholic, in my opinion, means the conviction, the belief that the Divine Spirit, in a similar way as in the case of Jesus (although minutis minuendis, obviously), has descended upon me and has become incarnated in me, making of me nor "another" Christ (alter Christus), but the same Christ (ipse Christus)<sup>32</sup> of which Jesus is the Head (to follow Paul) and I a member in the process of becoming it more and more fully. It means to be a person in whom the Divine Spirit dwells nor as a host, but as his "soul" (in the sense of the intimior intimo meo of St. Augustine). This is what baptism means for me. A Christian is a person baptized (in this sense) by the Holy Spirit. A Christian is then the person in whom the Divine Spirit has become flesh.

I may make a series of distinctions:

<sup>41</sup> See Pierre Bühler and Charles Duquoc in Concilium 216 (1988). "If the Church in Indie lived for centuries on a borrowed identity...", begins A. Karokaran, the chief editor of the Indian journal Third Millenium (3, no. 1 [2000]: 29] in an article titled, "Mission: An Alternative Model." The Catholic bishop emeritus of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico, Samuel Ruiz García, speaks of the loss of identity of the indigenous Christian population in Chipasa (see National Catholic Reporter, Pebruary 18, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> The expression comes from Pius XII, referring to Christ in the liturgy—and not only in the Eucharist. See *Denz.*, 3855.

- The ontic Christian, in whom the Divine Spirit is the living principle. In this sense any human being, and even any being is a Christophany—inasmuch as any being is more than a material entity, and Man more than a merely developed monkey.
- The ontological Christian, in whom there is a certain consciousness of the to use a Christian vocabulary, not even a theistic one. Anybody conscious of and believing in the indwelling Mystery (lagain another word to be relativized) in one's own life, that is, believing in the fact that one does not have absolute possession of one's own being, whatever name one may use to express it, is what I believe a Christian is.
- The historical Christian, for whom the Christian language makes sense and has
  appropriated it while retaining the freedom of finding a more and more acceptable
  interpretation of it. Christ becomes then the name for that Symbol
- The sociological Christian, who could be also called the ecclesial one, who owes allegiance to one of the existing Christian groups or churches.
- The Catholic Christian, who embodies in a very particular way that mysterious consciousness. I would like to retain the scandal and concreteness of the geohistorical symbol of Rome, at least for the first two millennia, and in spite of the possible arrogance of the word "catholic" if interpreted as "universal" and not as the call to concrete wholeness of every one. A Roman Catholic would in fact mean, for me at least, not the fan of the last pope (whoever he may be) or the spiritual citizen of the Vatican (without criticizing this loyalty), but the person whose spiritual pedigree passes through those two millennia of Roman history, not to get entangled in it or to glorify it, but as the historical springboard from which the Catholic tradition may still jump into the transhistorical Unknown.

What, then, makes a Christian Christian? My answer is simple: Christ's Spirit living in Man. This Christ-Spirit is the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the Divine Life. This Divine Life is just the Mystery of Life. The interpretation of this very Mystery is an interpretation of Christianity, and there are traditional Christian interpretations and other versions that the Christian tradition has rejected. But I am not dealing with what an orthodox Christian is (then we should previously agree on the criteria of orthodoxy—and not necessarily by a democratic procedure); I am trying to express what I understand by Christian identive.

I have implicitly distinguished between conscious and unconscious identity. If the idem of identity needs to be a self-recognized identity, then it becomes an ipse and my general thesis stands. Christian identity is the sincere self-confession as such. The confession entails a receiver, that is, a community. And this was my thesis. If the idem has an ontic value, independently of its ontological consciousness, then my larger personal thesis, as it has been just described, would be the case.

To the objection, "Then everybody is a Christian," I have little to counterobject, because, to me, my Christian consciousness is not something that severs me from my fellow beings, but just the contrary, that which establishes the deepest bond of communion, namely that we all are pervaded by the Divine Spirit, as the <u>Isda-upanisad</u> so beautifully puts it. When I confess myself a Catholic, I do not have the feeling

nor the will nor the understanding that I belong to a religious sect (in the best and traditional sense of the word) that has existed on earth for only two millennia. It is the transcendental identity cast into the mold of my categorical identity. I confess to belonging to the human race, and even more to the entire Reality that for eons has taken the shape that it has taken in me. Ecclesia ab Abel, 33 said the church fathers. 44

To the retort, "What is then the use of being a Christian?" I have equally nothing to reply. I am nor moving on the area of usefulness, and am far from any utilitarian consideration. I would even retort that this is a wrong way of being a Christian, a bourgeois ideology. But this is not the point now. The point is that being a Christian belongs to another sphere altogether, and as I believe, to the ultimate one.

To the further objection, "It is, however, a particular language," I would again say yes—but immediately adding that the particularity lies not so much in the answer as in the question. I did not ask the question. There is no need to put it. But once it is put, the answer has to play within the limits set by the question itself.

And this is what I tried to do.

<sup>43 &</sup>quot;The Church has been existing since Abel."

<sup>44</sup> See Henri De Lubac, Méditation sur l'Eglise (Paris: Aubier, 1954); Yves Congar, Esquisses du mystère de l'Eglise (Paris: Cerf, 1941); Hugo Rahner, Symbole der Kirche (Salzburg: Miller, 1964), for references.

# SECTION II

## CHRISTOPHANY THE FULLNESS OF MAN

Translated by Alfred DiLascia



έν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν 1 Jn 1:7

Ad lucem hoc in saeculo peregrinantibus qui sperant se ambulatores esse in luce

> A quanti sono *peregrinanti* per il campo (*per agros*) della temporalità nella speranza di *peregrinare nella luce*



### PREFACE

iδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος *Ecce homo* Behold the man.

In 19:5

# पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं

purușa evedam sarvam Man is certainly all this.

RVX.90.2

This study constitutes an attempt to concentrate the pathos of an entire life into a few pages; I have been meditating and writing on this topic for more than fifty years. The first part of the work constitutes a reflection on the central figure of Christian consciousness and proposes a deepening of classical Christoology. This "new" discipline, named Christophany, intends to offer to the contemporary world, characterized above all by a widespread scientific mentality and collapse of the religious and cultural frontiers of mankind, a response to the yearning for the fullness of life that burns in every heart.

The second part consists in an attempt, bold perhaps, to decipher the mystical experience of Jesus of Nazareth, since it is difficult to understand a message without knowing, to a certain extent, the messenger's heart.

The third part is limited to describing, in nine starat, the Christic epiphany in the light of an experience that has passed through the scrutiny of the methodology mentioned in part 1. Some readers might ask why citations are given in Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit—sometimes untranslated. The bolder the undetraking ose scrut on new paths, the greater the need to be rooted in one's own tradition and open to others, which makes us conscious that we are not alone and allows us to reach a wider vision of reality. Even the notes are intended to be an invitation not to forget the wisdom of four ancestors.¹ I do not intend to be "original," rather

With regard to classical texts, the ancient custom has been followed of citing the first division (book, part, chapter) with Roman numerals. In the case of biblical texts, citations follow contemporary style.

(perhaps) originario, in the sense of seeking communion with the origin from which we obtain our inspiration, not in order to repear lessons more or less known but in order to participate creatively in the very Life of reality.

I have been asked why I have written this book with such commitment. Above all, I must say, in order to deepen the faith that has been given me by submitting my intuitions to the critical examination of the intellect and the wisdom of tradition, not for my own interest but in order to flow into that vital current that flows in the deep arteries of the mystical body of reality. The first task of every creature is to complete, to perfect, his icon of reality.

Second, this book interrogates the twenty centuries of Christological tradition and allows itself to be interrogated by that imposing doctrinal corpus that needs both aggiornamento ("updating") and reform (ecclesia semper est reformanda [The church must always be reformed]).

It is sum magno timore et tremula intentione (with fear and quaking intention)—
to cite Hildegarde von Bingen's prologue to Scivias—that I bring my contribution
to the rich two-thousand-year-old theological tradition concerning Trinitarian
and Christological mysteries, since all dogmas are intrinsically related. A profound
humility should accompany such a great ambition.

I am convinced both by the signs of the time and by the work of contemporary scholars that the world finds itself before a dilemma of planetary proportions: either there will be a radical change of "civilization," of the meaning of the *biumanum*, or a catastrophe of cosmic proportions will occur. This leads me to see a genuine meeting of cultures as a first step toward a metanoia preenant with hone.<sup>2</sup>

Third, but no less important, this study addresses itself to those for whom the name of Christ bears no particular meaning, either because they belong to other cultures or because, for various reasons, they have canceled Him from their interest.

These pages constitute a reflection on the human condition in its deepest dimension, least conditioned by historical vicissitudes. There exists in each of us a desire for fullness and life, for happiness and the infinite, for truth and beauty that goes beyond religious and cultural contingencies. To avoid abstract or generic generalizations I have followed the thread of a two-chousand-year tradition whose symbol is the Greek translation of a Hebrew name. Note that I am not saying that Christ is the fullness of life but that this fullness, effective since the beginning, is one that the Christian tradition calls Jesus the Christ.

The theological translation summarized in these pages highlights a conviction I have been expounding for many decades; it is the task of the third Christian millennium to transcend Abrahamic monotheism without damaging the legitimacy and validity of monotheistic religions. This task, initiated at the Council of Jerusalem

<sup>2</sup> This is the impression the author derives from reading the rich and profound works of such admirable writers as Von Balthasar, Barth, Bonhoeffer, Brunner, Bultmann, Congar, de Lubac, Feuerbach, Garrigou-Lagrange, Jaspers, Lévinas, Lonergan, Mancini, Rahner, Scheeben, Schmaus, and Tillich—to cite only a few recent and contemporary authors.

Preface 103

(Ac 15:1-33), entails not a denial of the divine but an opening to the great intuition of the Trinity—the meeting point of human traditions.

A sociopolitical translation would constitute an acknowledgment that the last half millennium of human history is so characterized by European domination that one may now talk of the Europeanization of the world. In this way the Westernization of life has been spread over the whole planet. But these Western values are inseparably bound to Christianity, which finds itself today ever more detached from any ecclesiastical organization, understood as a more or less open sociological body. What remains is Christ: real symbol of divinization—that is, of the Fullness of Man. (Some would prefer that 1 say "symbol of human Fullness," but this would not be correct; the fullness of Man is more than a human fullness. The complete Man is Man divinized; that unique being, athirst for the infinite, is nor himself until he reaches his destiny.) Man is more than his "human" nature.

I would remind the third group of readers of the only scriptural phrase in which the word "divinity" appears: "For in him the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily" (σωματικῶς) (Col 2:9).3 'This is the human vocation!

I wish to acknowledge all the friends who have read parts of the text in a first draft and have stimulated me to clarify certain points. In particular, I thank Milena Carrara Pavan, who has been by my side, with patience and dedication, throughout the long vicissitudes of the original writing of this text, which otherwise would never have seen the light. A special thanks to my friend Alfred DiLascia, the English translator, and Joseph Cunneen, without whose encouragement this book would not have come to publication.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> It is sadly significant that the phrase "the body of Christ" (Col 2:17) has disappeared in numerous translations.



### Part 1

όαββί . . .

and I in you.

## The Christophanic Experience

```
ποῦ μένεις ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε
...
μείνατε ἐν ἐμοὶ κάγὼ ἐν ὑμῖν
...
Rabbi, ...
μείνατε εἰν ἐμοὶ
imanes?
Venite εἰ videbitis
...
Manete in me
et ego in vobis
Teacher, where do you live?
come and you will see.
...
You remain in me,
```

Jn 1:38-39; 15:4



### 1

### A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTOLOGY

#### The Point of Departure

Christ's knowledge (gnosis thriston, Ph 3:8), that knowledge pregnant with eternal life (Jn 17:3), cannot be fragmentary. No partial knowledge can take us to salvation, to realization. Every knowledge is fragmented, not only when its object has become detached from the rest of reality, but also when the knowing subject has shattered its knowing by reducing it to either sensible perception or rational intelligibility. It thereby forgets the knowledge of the third eye, on which more than one tradition, including the Christian (the eye of the flesh, the eye of the mind, the eye of faith) insists. Salvlife knowledge. Christian gnosis and Vedantic jñāna constitute that holistic vision which assimilates the known to the knower, which Scholastics call sisso beatifed, the "beatific vision") when it has reached its fullness.

From an intercultural and interreligious perspective, the key question of the entire Christian tradition centers on the figure of Christ. The other religions ask Christianity, "Who is Christ; A supreme pantokratôr? A Western divine prophet? A universal savior? A man like others?"

"Christology" is the word, over fifteen centuries old, with which theological reflection refers to the mystery of Christ. Since the first generation of Christians, Christology has been the interpretation that Christian hearts and minds have given of the impact the figure of Christ has produced on them.

We know that every interpretation depends on the context and the cultural approach of the person who elaborates it. We know, moreover, that Christians believe that their understanding of Christ is modeled on the faith that illuminates the Christian intellect so that it may grasp, as far as possible, the reality of Christ. But we also know that in every "revelation" it is up to us, limited historical beings, to understand the language of the "revealed words." The divine revelation is received by our limited human minds: quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur (Whatever is received is received in conformity with the modality of the receiver). The "divine revelation" thus becomes also human revelation.

The Christology of the first centuries was forged by the Christian faith against the background of Hebrew religion and Greek culture. Paul's genius is the fruit of the creative intersection—not exempt from tensions—of his Hebraic heart, Greek mind, and Roman life. There is no need to elaborate further the obvious fact that the Christology that has reached us today is the result of "Christian" faith

in dialogue with Judaism and the Greco-Roman world, later with the mentality of the new European peoples, and finally with Islamic culture. The contribution of the Americas has been reduced, in terms of doctrine, to some modern adaptations, and that of Asia, Africa, and Oceania has been practically nil—with the exception of Latin North Africa, or the Syriac Asia Minor of the early centuries. In addition, we should not forget the impact of popular religiosity on the Christian understanding of Christ, a fact that has rarely been taken into account by academic Christology. Very often the Christ of Ordinary Christians is not the Christ of the theologians.

We are far from the times when the Christian people at Ephesus, not content with the compromise formula that defined Mary as "mother of Christ" (rather han "mother of Jesus"), became enthusiastic over the formula that resonated in their "pagan" hearts: "mother of God" (dei genitrix, θεοτόκος). Modern popular understanding sees Christ with greater sympathy as "son of Man," probably without being too conscious of the Trinitarian depth of this intuition: God has a human mother, and Man a divine son.

As they first encounter traditional Christological images, it is understandable that the other peoples of the world have seen Christ as an exotic figure, more or less attractive, or as a suspicious construction associated with foreign conquerors and invaders, responsible for military operations that range from the Crusades to the reconquists, from colonialism to the Vienam War. Christology is not a purely chemical property of the mind but possesses a Sitz im Leben that shapes the interpretation of what Christology seeks to explain. In short, Christology is a Western product bound to the history of a culture. This is a statement of fact, not a value judgment.

Undoubtedly contemporary Christology has transcended the somewhat static character and no longer approaches the divine mystery with a treatise *De Deo uno* (On the One God) independently of Christ and the Trinity. But the relationship between the *De Deo trino* (On the Triune God) and the *De Deo Incarnato* (On God Incarnate) is still weak.

The long discussions in the history of Christian spirituality that make a distinction between la mystique du Christ et la mystique de Dieu² still contribute to a mentality that, in order to save a rigid monotheism, teast Christ in two. New winds are blowing, however. Vatican Council II not only binds Christ to God, as Protestant theology emphasizes, but to Man as well: "The mystery of man is seen in its own proper light in the mystery of the Word incarnate... This is true not only for Christians but also for all men of good will" (Gaudium et spes, no. 22). The most salient aspects of the councils "Christological revolution" are four: the importance given to kenõisis (Ph 2:5–11), "recapitulation" (Ep 1:10ff), the historicity of Jesus Christ (Heb 5:8–9), and soteriological affirmations.<sup>3</sup>

Among others, see a brief summary in Evers (1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Monchanin (1985), 157: "La mystique de Dieu est nécessairement au terme de la mystique du Christ."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> González-Faus (1966), 107-11.

My point of departure lies in traditional Christology, one that began much earlier than a few centuries ago—perhaps one should say much earlier than a few millennia ago—as the ancients believed and as we read in St. Augustine (Retractiones 1.12). Justin, commenting on John 1:9, does not hesitate to write that all those whave lived according to the Word are Christians" (Apologia 1.46), therebye demonstrating a forma mentis that sees the concrete as the manifestation of the universal. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and so on, offer us many other examples of the same "way of thinking."

#### The Situation of the World

Praxis is the matrix of history, even though, at the same time, it is shebria that informs he praxis. The existential situation of the world at the outset of the twenty-first century is so serious that we must not allow ourselves to be absorbed by internal political polemics or problems of a minor order (priesthood for women Procestant sacraments, ecumenism, sexual morality, modern rites, etc.). The world is undergoing a human and ecological crisis of planetary proportions. Seventy-five percent of its population lives in subhuman conditions; thousands of children die every day because of injustices Man has perpetrated. Since 1945, wars kill more than twelve hundred persons a day; religious intolerance is still all too alive throughout the planet, and the conflict among religions is still intensely inflamed.

What does contemporary Christology have to say about all of this? What bearing does the Christian response have on the burning problems of our day, and how is all of this related to Christ? Must we reduce Christ's message to the promise of a private salvation for the individual soul? Must the Christianity that claims to be historical renounce history? A Christology deaf to the cries of men and especially women today would be incapable of uttering any "word of God" whatsoever. The Son of Man was concerned with people. What is His manifestation, His epiphany today?

The situation of the world does not involve justice and goodness alone, but ruth and beauty as well; as Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) says, beauty is situated between goodness and justice (De amore IL.1). The often violent passion for justice and the rather mild approach to the search for truth and beauty are perhaps to be ascribed to the fact that, in the light of the modern fragmentation of Knowledge, we have forgotten the classical doctrine of the transcendentals (being-as-such is one, beautiful, true, and good). The degradation of beauty to a mere estheticism may be the sign of a similar forgetting. Here the intercultural contribution is important.

Human consciousness today cannot ignore the contemporary condition of intercultural reality—that is, the twofold fact that we are conscious of many cultures and of their peculiar somosis with the technical and scientific character of the dominant culture that originated in Europe. The various cultures and religions may still proclaim their distinctive criteria of truth and beauty, but they cannot remain enclosed within themselves. The meeting of cultures is inevitable. Even the fact that there are Christians on all five continents is experienced as a dilemma

by those very Christians, who are culturally marginalized by their historicalcultural roots. Either Christ may be extrapolated from the culture and history with which He has been identified until now, or these Christians must abandon their respective cultures if they wish to remain Christian. This is the challenge: either Christianity limits itself to being monocultural (while including a wide range of subcultures) or it renounces that right to universal citizenship that even a colonial period had acknowledged—although in a wrong way. Sensitive to the problems of the modern world and conscious of the responsibility of religions, I have been hoping for many years for a Second Council of Jerusalem (whatever the site might be) that would bring together not only Christians but exponents of the world's other human traditions.

Here are some of the topics to be confronted:

- The problems internal to every culture (historical concreteness).
- Collective dialogue on the diverse worldviews underlying the different religions (human coexistence).
- The harmony with nature that must be restored by something other than simple ecological cosmetics. Ecosophy is a contemporary imperative of human consciousness (cosmic brotherhood).
- Human responsibility in the face of a mysterious reality seen as either immanent or transcendent and that many traditions call "divine" (transcendence of human life).

Whatever be the case, we must begin with a few concrete, even though modest, steps, one of which is expressed by the word "Christophany."

## The Limits of Christology

Traditionally we spoke of Christ's function in the universal economy of salvation. Generally speaking, this was a question of a purely logical deduction from "Christian premises" without any critical reflection on those very premises, a deduction that entailed the absolutization of a certain logic that one believed could be extended to the whole of humanity. The contemporary intercultural challenge, however, has shown itself more profound than previously imagined. There is no doubt that classical Christology does not have at its disposal categories adequate to confront these problems. Today's Christology is neither catholic—that is, universal—nor is in necessary that it be so. Its content cannot be separated from the parameters of intelligibility that belong to a powerful yet single current of human culture.

We must be conscious of theological discussions of the past and the present regarding Christianity's role among the religions of the world and of Christ's function in the economy of salvation. Although this work does not ignore such discussions, it does not intend to be either polemical or critical of other positions; it simply presents a point of view. I am delighted to learn from others and always ready to learn better,

in amplitude, extension, height, and depth, the love of Christ that transcends every knowledge because it belongs to God's plērāma (Ep 3:18–19).

The fact is that Christology has been developed only within the framework of the Western world. Despite its Trinitarian soul, Christology has not really freed itself from the monortheism it inherited from the Abrahamic tradition.

Let it be clear, however, that it is not a question of cither supplanting traditional Christology or of forgetting the tradition from which Christianity was born. What we need to do is to revisit the experience of the mystery of Christ in the light of our times—to recognize the kairos of the present, even though our need does not opring from an anxiety to be up to date. We have heard talk about a cultural sophism, as if philosophy should be merely an applied sociology. We should remember St. Thomas's demanding phrase: Studium philosophise not est ad hoc ut sciatur quid homines stenserint, sed qualities se habeat veritas rerum. The study of philosophy does not aim at knowing the opinions of Men but rather the truth of things; De caelo [1.3). After all, there is a middle path between a relativistic and an objectivistic conception of truth: relativity is not relativism.

The indispensable presuppositions to make the Christian message intelligible and acceptable were called preamblase fidei. The first of these requirements, preambles to the faith, were said to be "a minimal degree of culture"—of a culture convinced of possessing universal value. In fact, however, that degree was the product of a very particular form of thought and vision of reality.

An example will spare us from dwelling on this point. The great sage Eihei Dögen, the man who introduced Zen into Japan, wrote a short treatise in 1233, the Gbenjokan (later inserted in his magnum opus, Shoboghenzo). In the first paragraph we read, "Inasmuch as all things are at one and the same time authentic, illusion and awakening exist, the activity of life exists, being born exists, dying exists."

These words suffice for us to presume that neither Aristotelian logic nor linear time nor inert matter nor individuality enters into the conception of reality on which this text rests, not to mention so many other Buddhist beliefs: Man is one of the six manifestations of living and conscious beings; while things are nonsubstantial, a creator God does not exist. We are not interested in discussing whether these ideas are more or less true within a worldview that bestows plausibility on them. We simply ask outselves what kind of meaning traditional Christianity might have in such a vision of the world. In order to bear witness to Christ, are Christianis justified in undertaking the so-called évangélisation de base? Is it necessary to destroy all the other symbolic universes in order to initiate those presuppositions (preambula fdet) on which the Christian kêryant rests? There is the problem

<sup>4</sup> Borne (1987), 398.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. a criticism in Panikkar (1983), 321-34.

<sup>6</sup> Dögen (1997), 13.



### THE TASK OF CHRISTOPHANY

### Christology and Christophany

Although the word is Greek, I take the word "Christophany" to signify a Christian reflection that is to be elaborated in the third millennium. In this respect let us note that three phenomena characterize the contemporary religious scene: (1) the decline of the traditional religions along with the proliferation of new forms of religioisty, (2) the internal crisis of Christian identity, and (3) the external situation of a word in which cultures and religions meet on a planetary scale.

This meeting, however, almost always takes place within the marrix of the Western technoscientific world, which, at least in part, bears Christian origins. The Christophany that I propose may be characterized in the following fashion. First and above all, Christophany does not pretend to offer a universal paradigm, nor does it even say that historical Christianity should adopt this model. It elaws open the question whether Christianity should be a pusillus grex (a small flock), a "remnant of Israel" (I p 31:7), or a leaven that helps the whole dough to ferment (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20–21). Christophany simply intends to offer an image of Christ that all people are capable of believing in, especially those contemporaries who, while wishing to remain open and tolerant, think they have no need of either diluting their "Christianity" or of damaging their fidelity to Christ. And Christophany offers the same experience to all those who nourish an interest in that Man who lived some twenty centuries ago but still secure, to many people, to live.

Second, Christophany, which is obviously a Christian word, although open to universal problems in a concrete and therefore limited way, seeks to present this epiphany of the human condition both in the light of our contemporary situation and of what seems to originate out of something beyond Man—that is, the light hat has accompanied Home aspiens since his very first appearance on earth. This Christophany, however, should be very cautious so as not to repeat the old error in which religions have constantly been engaged—cultural and nationalistic manipulation of the divine, as in the phrase Gott mit uns! (God is with us).

Third, the word "Christophany"—in itself ambiguous—could be interpreted to mian a more or less docetic vision of Jesus, but this is not the meaning that we attribute to it in these pages. Instead, we employ the word in a sense that is in greater.

<sup>1</sup> See Panikkar (1992).

harmony with the phaneros ("manifestation") of the Christian Scriptures—that is, a visible, clear, public manifestation of a truth. Christophany stands for a manifestation of Christ to human consciousness and includes both an experience of Christ and a critical reflection on that experience.

Fourth, Christophany cannot—better, must not—ignore or pretend to abolish the Christological tradition of the preceding two millennia. Every growth requires both continuity and change, in the sense of the adage that the wise steward nouse et vetera profert (Mt 13:52). And this implies that a Christian who is both rooted in tradition and open to the new should recognize that we are talking about Christ. Insist on this fact of continuity. Despite the noveley of the name, Christophany traces itself to those profound intuitions of traditional Christology that it does not replace but, on the contrary, prolongs and deepens in fields hitherto unexplored and proposes new perspectives.

Fifth, unlike Christology, the word "Christophany" bears another value inasmuch as it suggests that the meeting with Christ is irreducible to a simple doctrinal or intellectual (not only rational) approach that is proper to Christology. Yes, the logos is also God's Logos, but it is not the whole Trinity. In addition, although the Spirit is inseparable from the living Christ, it is not subordinated to Logos Christ. The word "Christophany" appeals to the Spirit, oo. It is this that constitutes the capital difference between Christology and Christophany.

Christophany takes nothing away from Christology but is open to the reality of the Spirit, which, without separating logos from pneuma, does not subordinate the lattet to the former. Neither is it a "pneuma-logy," but it receives the Spirit's presence and action in a different form—the form of the third eye. We have already asserted that without a mystical vision, Christophany does not acquire its full meaning.

The substitution of the word "Christology" with "Christophany" does not mean that we are forgetting the logos; on the contrary, we are suggesting the transcending of a purely rational approach and a thematic opening to the Spirit's action when we study the figure of Christ. "The Son of Man" is neither comprehensible nor real without the Spirit that gives Him life.

The Spirit is irreducible to either a rational intelligibility or a feeling (or other "sentiment") subordinate to reason. Real human life is guided neither by the stoic secundum rationem alone nor by the biological sequere naturam but also by the secundum te of liturgical prayer. Two words helps us to communicate what we wish to say. The first is phania—that is, the manifestation or direct appearance (without

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> From the time of Aristotle (Met. XII.4) "to appear" has been construed to mean the revelation of being. See Heidegger (1966), 77: "Soin west als Erscheinen" (Being manifests te sesence in what appears); the whole chapter "Sein und Schein" (75-88); also "das legein des logos als apophainesthai, zum-sich-zeigen-bringen" (130) (the saying of logos as manifestation). We record this text to underscore the profound cultural unity of the West—from Parmenides on.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Mt 4:1 and Mk 1:12, which speak of Jesus as "guided by the Spirit."

intermediaries) to human consciousness, which becomes conscious of something even though it cannot understand it by reason alone, and even though reason does play an unsubstitutable role (not every manifestation is believable). The second word is "experience," understood as the consciousness of an immediate presence and thus as the irreducible instance of any human activity whatsoever—although even here we require verification from all other human faculties.

Sixth, in addition, Christophany accentuates a disposition of spirit that is more passive or feminine in receiving Christ's impact on the human consciousness in contrast to a more aggressive inquiry on the part of reason, which aims at intelligibility in and through rational evidence—as it were fides "petens" intellectum (the faith that "prays" for understanding). When we say "passive," we are thinking of the contemplative attitude of the pati divina (impact of the divine factor) and therefore of the mystical dimension.

Sevench, this notion of Christ must include both the figure of the historical past and the reality of the present. Christophany is not mere exegesis of "inspired" texts nor Christian archaeology, and not even an exclusively analytic and deductive reflection of that historical reality that Christians call Christ. Christ does not belong to the past alone. Christophany practices theology of the highest order and does not therefore accept the dichotomy between theology and philosophy that has been practiced in recent centuries. In traditional language it is both fides quaerens intellectum (faith seeking understanding) and intellectus fidei (a [critical] knowledge of faith). A philosophy without theology is irrelevant, and a theology without philosophy is a more or less superstitious credulity.

Christology has been, in general, a reflection pursued by Christians who, except in its first period of formation, have virtually ignored the world's other tradictions. Christophany, on the other hand, is open to both a dialogue with other religions and an interpretation of that same tradition on the basis of a scenario that embraces he past (including the pre-Christian) as well as the present (even what is called the non-Christian, including the secular). It is for these reasons that the new name is justified, for Christophany is not only a Christology modernized or adapted to our times. Christophany penetrates into every manifestation of the human spirit. In our time, for example, modern science, paradigm of the human spirit, has developed independently of both God—essi Deus non daretur (as if God did not exist) and the reality of Christ.

<sup>4</sup> Φανερός (phaners), as is the case with the word φανός (phanes), has as its first meaning shining, derived from φαίνω (to bring to light), Φῶς (phôs) is light, primarily in the sense of light from the sun, and comes from the rose bhas, whence we derive "evident," manifest," "visible," "open." In a different context I would have entitled the book Christáloka, to indicate the splendor or light of Christ. Christophany would like to be the splendor of the Mystery (which Christians call "Christic") visible to all—although, to be sure, in different forms.

See Panikkar (1997), 25-37.

Perhaps roday's shepherds still experience the announcement of the incarnation, although the magi of the present see and follow stars very different from the star seen in the east. Christophany is constitutively open to a dialogue with the contemporary scientific mind. It is not a discipline enclosed within either temples or academies; its epiphany, on the contrary, is "like a flash of lightning that comes from the east and manifests itself (fout vertox, phainetai) all the way to the west" (Mc 24-22.)

Eighth, inasmuch as ir is open to dialogue and seeks to integrate the figure of Christ within a wider cosmovision, Christophany is not a discipline centered exclusively on a past event but one that tends to be a vision concerning "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6; 1:14; 1 Jn 5:6), an intellectus saeculi (understanding of the world).

What we have just said implies a thematic integration of the homeomorphic equivalents of that mystery that Christians call Christ. Christophany does not, in principle, exclude a priori any epiphany of the sacred and the divine without, however, neglecting the task of critical discernment. Not every one of the sacred's epiphanies is a Christophany, although the latter does seek to distinguish grades and levels within every hierophany as it proceeds to study the ways different traditions have interpreted the Christian understanding of Christ and the respective interpretations of His homeomorphic equivalents. By the latter we understand symbols and concepts that in other systems of belief or thought exhibit an analogy of the third degree that makes them homeomorphic. What this means is that the homeomorphic equivalents discharge, in their respective systems, a function that is equivalent (not the same) to that which other notions (or symbols) discharge in their own system. The word of God, "God-talk," is not bound in chains: Verbum Dei (ὁ λόγος του θεοῦ, ho logos tou theou) non est alligatum (The word of God is not fettered [2 Tim 2-9]).

Christophany should not be an exercise in Christian solipsism, a suggestion that pertains not only to individuals but also to the Christian church in its entirety, as well as to the historical intertwining of humanity, especially in our own day. Christ's manifestation also generates a cosmic repercussion. Christophany interrogates other cultures, too, as they in turn interrogate it. The other religions are no longer treated as adversaries or "pagan" but are acknowledged in terms of their own self-understanding. This allows us not only to understand the other traditions better but likewise to penetrate more deeply into the very mystery of Christ, a mystery that is like a lamp shining from one end of the sky to the other (Lk 17:24). The dialogue leads to a deeper understanding of ourselves and to an integration of the interepretations of the others.

Ninth, the Christophany that we propose considers the other religions of the world not as Christians have often interpreted them but as they understand themselves—as, to use Scholastic language, *loci theologici*, proper and legitimate places for theological activity. How to understand another religion adequately is a problem in itself that at this time we can do no more than simply mention. In this sense, Christophany dares to widen the concept of theology as "God-talk," *logas tou* 

theou, in the sense of the subjective genitive—that is, "the word of God," which we ourselves can discover in every authentic expression.

In the attempt to explain Christ to Buddhists and Hindus, not with the usual words ad usum nostrorum (solely for our own use), as if they were for Christians' private use, but by means of parameters that make sense for the partner in the dialogue, we find ourselves faced with the great difficulty of presenting the figure of Christ in a language in which the Christian does not feel betrayed. The contexts and the languages are different.

### The Literary Genre

Readers accustomed to the analytic classifications proper to scientific thought will ask themselves to what kind of literary gener this writing belongs: exegetical work, theological study, edification, mystical effusion, poetry, intercultural philosophy, psychology, or autobiography. The truth is that I am trying to transcend the dilemma that underlies such a question. Modern culture seems to have virtually forgotten that simple intuition of things that is neither complex nor synthetic, since it is not a question of summing up particular kinds of knowledge. The whole is not just the sum of its parts, and we must be careful not to say "equal to the sum" because we would thereby fall into algebraic or merely calculative thought. For example, 3 = 1 + 1 + 1, but this equation cannot be applied to the Trinity, Jesus speaks to us of the simple eye. Simplicity (Mr 6:22; 1 k 11:34) was one of the ideals of the first monks and has been regarded since antiquity as a sign of wisdom. If it were necessary to put a label on this study, it could perhaps be classified as intercultural philosophy, understanding the word "philosophy" also in an intercultural sense and not only as an opus rationis.<sup>6</sup>

This work intends to be a studium, in accordance with the Ciceronian definition (De Inventione 125). In the Upanishadic tradition, it belongs to the order of the midialbyianna, contemplation that entails the vital assimilation of what the elders have heard and personal elaboration with one's own mind. If I were gifted, I might have summarized my ideas in a poem, but the reader would consider it to be more or less a metaphor or an individual testimony—nothing more. I have therefore felt obliged to place myself in both ancient and contemporary traditions by making forays into almost all the genres mentioned above in the light of my conviction that philosophy cannot be broken into separate specialized compartments without wounding its very heart. Theology (philosophy) must not be considered either

<sup>6</sup> See the illuminating writings of Xavier Tilliette on the reflections of modern philosophers concerning the figure of Christ. See a summary in Tilliette (1990a), 424–30, and more specifically Tilliette (1990b; 1993); see also the brilliant pages of Milano (1987).

The three classical moments of distinctly human activity, according to the Upanisads, are Srawana, the hearing of the word (of the Vedas or of the wise man); manana, the effort to understand (an operation proper to the mind—manat); and nididyhāsana, that contemplative assimilation by which one becomes what one knows, and hence entails praxis.

a deductive or purely conceptual science. Rather, in accordance with the oldest tradition, it should be viewed as an activity of the contemplative intellect whereing "contemplation" does not mean theoria alone but also active participation in the templum, with all the lights and powers with which we are endowed. Philosophy or theology is thus a spiritual activity inseparable from the search for "holiness," a word that must be understood in the light of the very philosophy it professes.

What appears here is clearly a latent philosophical idea and a holistic vision of reality, and we do not avoid critical allusions to certain presuppositions and a personal interpretation of tradition. The thoughts of different traditions are not developed in greater detail so as not to lose the guiding thread of these pages, whose intent is to lead to a personal experience of that mystery that can guide one's entire life.

There are three reasons for maintaining a respectful distance from the complex, classical, and more or less orthodox classical Christologies. The first is the impossibility of gaining an exhaustive knowledge of the profound reflections on the tension between the human and the divine in the figure of Christ. Moreover, the enormous number of finterpretations bear restimony to a culture's vitality.

The second is my suspicion that we have arrived at a conceptual saturation that has covered virtually the entire spectrum of possibilities within a cultural tradition, however ample and profound it might be. Fortunately, the situation permits a certain synthetic vision for discovering, for example, that the myths of Western culture have exhibited a certain uniformity for at least twenty-five centuries and that the Christian imprint has been decisive. In this context Karl Jaspers was able to write, "We Westerners are all Christians."

The third reason, implicit perhaps in the preceding two, is the conviction that humanity is facing a crisis that involves at least the last six or eight millennia of humanexperience. This situation highlights interculturality, not in order to defend some impossible multiculturalism, but to encourage a reciprocal fecundation of cultures. This Christophany touches only implicitly on the important questions that feminist theology raises. The new feminist vision that is being developed not only offers us a hermenutical key for interpreting the politics of domination that males practice more rless unconsciously but also helps us see the profound meaning of a Christology of liberation. Although we cannot ignore the challenges that these problems raise, the perspective that we have adopted attempts to integrate feminist intuitions within a framework that embraces the masculine feminine dualism.

### The Divine Manifestation

For almost half a century I have maintained the proposition that every being is a Christophany. It is a question not of converting the whole world to Christianity but of recognizing that the very nature of reality shows the nondualist polarity

<sup>8</sup> Jaspers (1963), 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1994) is only one example that might be chosen from an abundant bibliography.

between the transcendent and the immanent in its every manifestation. Political life cannot be reduced to a selection of *means* (for what end?), nor religious life to the achievement of an atemporal *end* torn from the actual world.

Although it is a concrete form of expressing the universal, Christophany libertacs—perhaps one should say redeems—the figure of Christ from a particularistic culture. It also liberates from religious, political, and philosophical monotheism, as well as anarchical polytheism, both of which are at the origin of so many civil wars rhouehout the "created world." <sup>10</sup>

Neither is the Tinity a monotheism (it would then be a docetism) nor God a Neither is twould then be a tritheism) or a simple universal concept (it would then be an atheism). Christ opens us to the Tinitarian mystery. The divinization of Man has constituted a human theme since at least the beginning of historical consciousness. The Hellenic memory of this was still alive among the first Christians, and its echo is still evident when Pico della Mirandola writes that Man was created after creation was completed. For this reason we do not possess a nature as all other beings do but remain free to construct our nature and thus to become the image and likeness of Him who in se ipso verae rerum substantiae perfectionem totam unit et colligit (unites and gathers in Himself the entire perfection of the true substance of things.). If

A similar vision would liberate us today from an ideology widely diffused in the modern scientific community: evolutionistic anthropology. Even if our body were descended from less developed animals and our souls were the product of a bioneurological evolution, real and concrete Man in any case is not a species of a genus "animal." The consciousness of our possible divinization—or, one might say, our aspiration for the infinite—makes us essentially different. As I shall point out later, a spirit exists in us that makes us enter into communion—into koinônia, Scripture would say (2 Pet 1:4)—with divine nature.

At the same time, this divinization of Man does not consist in an alienation so as to become a transcendent God—which we are not—but to become in fullness what we potentially are—apax dei, as the Scholastics said, even though they were too subtle about the potentia oboedientalis. True divinization is full humanization. What else did the church fathers mean? They intended not to make Christ a second God but to discover what He reveals to us: that we too can become God. Christ "divinizes Man" (Веспольй обифовтоу; heopoiön anthrôpon).\(^12\) This divinization

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The contemporary mind is understanding more and more clearly the problem of the monotheistic incongruity within monotheism. In addition to Erik Peterson's Der Monotheismus als politheis Problem (1983 1) 1931), the bibliography is immense. See Congar (1981) and Breton (1981), besides other works on the Trinity. The profound work of Corbin (1981) stands by itself. For a brilliant synthesis of the problems entailed by the passage from montheism to the Trinity, see Milliant (1987).

Pico della Mirandola, Opera Omnia, vol. 6, Exposition (Basle, 1572), 300ff.; de Lubac presents other texts with a magisterial commentary (1974), 83.

<sup>12</sup> Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus xi.

120 CHRISTIANITY

makes sense only within the sphere of the incarnation and the Trinity; in strict monotheism it becomes impossible and blasphemous.<sup>13</sup>

Let us recall a few widely known assertions:

- "God's Word became Man so that you might learn how to become God."
- "The Word of God became Man and the son of God the son of Man, so that Man, united to the Word of God and receiving sonship, might become son of God."15
- "We were not made Gods at the beginning but Men, and at the end Gods."
- "He [Christ] became Man in order to divinize us."17
- He became Man so that "I too might be made God."18
- "The incarnation makes God a Man through the divinization of Man, and Man a God through the humanization (ἀνθρωποποί ησις; antbrōpopoi ēsis) of God."<sup>19</sup>
- "That I may become God to the extent that He became Man."
- "In each one of us the son of God becomes Man and the son of Man becomes
  the son of God "21

With a leap of almost twenty centuries, we may quote perhaps the last great Scholastic philosopher, one who underscored the experiential dimension of Christianity:

Man is a formal projection of divine reality itself, in a finite way of being God... God is transcendent in the human person insofar as the person is God in a deiform way. It is precisely as Christianity is a religion of deiformity that its experiential character constitutes its supreme theological experience. <sup>22</sup>

Christophany, however, does not focus on the divinization of Man. The intuition is found, after all, in a great many religions. The texts that I have cited speak of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See the various articles in the Dictionnaire de Spirinalité auctique et mystique, dourine et histoire (Paris: Beauchesne, 1935–95): sx. "Divinisation" (1957), vol. 3, cols. 1370–459. There is also a brief article on "Union à Dieu" (vol. 16, cols. 40–61), and other articles on mysticism and grace. For a synthetic study of Meister Eckhart's fidelity to the patristic tradition, unlike Sr. Thomas's, see Woods (1992).

<sup>14</sup> Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus I.9, in Bouyer (1960), 334.

<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, Adv. haer. III.19 (PG 7.939).

<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, Adv. haer. V (PG 7:1120).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Athanasius, *De incarnatione verbi* LIV (*PG* 25.192). See Bouyer's commentary (1960), 496–501.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, in Sherrard (1992), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Maximus the Confessor, Ambigua (PG 3.100a).

<sup>20</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, Oratio theologica III.19 (PG 3.100a).

<sup>21</sup> Eckhart, In Johannem (LW iii.118).

<sup>22</sup> Zubiri (1975), 62.

admirabile commercium between humanity and divinity. In the ancient formula Accepta tibi sit... festivitatis oblatio: ut... per hace sacrosancta commercia, in illius inveniamur forma, in quo tecum est nostra substantia (May the offering of this festivity be acceptable to you so that through these sacred exchanges we may reach the form of Him in whom our substance consists), the Christmas liturgy prays. Christophany bears a double meaning: the humanization of God corresponds to the divinization of Man. Christ is the revelation of God (in Man) as much as the revelation of Man (in God). The abyss between the divine and the human is reduced to zero in Christ, and it is converted in us in the hope of reaching the other shore. In the Offertory of the Mass the union of water and wine symbolizes the participation of our humanity in the divinity of Christ. <sup>33</sup>

Christophany refers directly to this humanization of God. It speaks of the making the new creature in Christ (2 Co 5:17), of the new Man (Ep 4:24; Col 3:10), of the renewal of everything (Rev 21:5). It would be important to add the vision of Ignatius of Antioch of Christ as "new Man" (καινός ἄνθροπος; kaims anthrôpo) in Ad Epheians 20:1, or as "Man made perfect" (τοῦ Τελείου ἀνθροπου (νουμόνου: tou teleion anthrôpou genomenou) in Ad Smyrnaeos 4.2, which reflects the tradition of the ἄνθροπος Χριστός; anthrôpos Christos of the Gospels, 3a swell as the Vedic tradition of the "primordial Man" (pursus) in whom all reality is recapitulated.<sup>34</sup>

In a word, Christophany projects us into the taboric light that allows us to discover our infinite dimension and presents the divine in the same light that allows us to discover God in His human dimension.

<sup>23</sup> Da nobis . . . eius divinitas esse consortes qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est participes (Grant that we may partake of the divinity of the one who became a partaker in our humanity).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> For Jesus as Man, see Mt 11:19; 26:72-74; Lk 23:4-14; and nineteen times in John.

<sup>25</sup> See RV X.90 and other texts in Panikkar (1977), 72ff.



### THE CHRISTOPHANIC EXPERIENCE

#### The Cosmovision

Christophany, as I have said, is not a simple extension of Christology that attempts to explain—and even understand—the "fact" of Christ. Since it is more experiential, Christophany concentrates its attention on the light in which Christ manifests Himself to us. In this way we discover that, not only do many of Jesus's statements create scandal by shaking our habits, but they seem to originate in a different vision of the world.

One striking example of this is Jesus's eucharistic speech (Jn 6:22-67). Scientific cosmology does not help here. If we restrict ourselves to such a scheme, the speech makes no sense; it could be accepted only as metaphor, and even "with a grain of salt." The same could be said of the cosmology of Jewish contemporaries of Jesus. They were "right" to be scandalized. We are dealing here with a dilemma of which we are not always conscious.

In order to accept in a human way—freely and consciously—any fact or event, we must seek to understand it intellectually. The famous problematic of Tertuilland, and quita absurdum (I believe because it is absurd) is generally misunderstood; its quita (because) does belong, after all, to the order of reason. It gives us a reason to believe. The dilemma consists in this: because of the intellectual process of acceptance, we must either integrate such a fact into our vision of the world or modify that vision. To take one significant example, most medieval Scholastics who believed in the saying philosophia ancilla theologiae (philosophy as the handmaid of theology) did not take into account the fact that the theology of the time was no more than an essentially Aristotelian-Platonic philosophy that served to undergird and constitute the basis of Christian dogma. In adhering to the Hellenic cosmology it converted theology into the ancilla philosophiae (the servant of philosophy). Even those who defend a theologia crucis (theology of the cross) and are ready to insult reason, end up building another castle based on another philosophy, as happened with the earliest Protestant theology.

The Christophany that I wish to introduce resolves the dilemma by accepting the second part—that is, by modifying its vision of the world. This is possible only if the faith that has allowed the reality of Christ to be revealed to us is strong enough

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Schestow (1994), 309–24, for an impassioned and intelligent defense of this attitude, about which more will be said below.

124 CHRISTIANITY

to overturn the habitual parameters of our understanding: again we encounter the antistrophe that we have noted before, an antistrophe that is more profound than Nietzsche's Unwertung ("transvaluation [of values]").

The problem is central. The manifestation of Christ, the epiphany that stands at the basis of Christophany, is so powerful that, inasmuch as it does not reenter the categories of the rational mind, it unsettles a merely rational cosmovision. Luther, among many others, had seen and suffered this dilemma, which in face caused his antipathy to Scholasticism inasmuch as he believed that its "theology" was only Greek wisdom, "foolishness before God" (1 Cor 3:19). In brief, Christophany requires, in addition to the two eyes we use to deal with everyday experience, a third eye, which faith alone can open. The faith that moves mountains (Mt 17:20) and dominates the plants and the elements (Mt 20:21; Lk 17:6; Mk 11:22) may well modify our cosmovision.

What then is the change that is necessary to bring to "our" cosmovision?

The question makes no sense because worldviews are not changed at will: they constitute the omnicomprehensive myth that produces meaning and makes things and events coherent with its distinctive vision of the world. To allow this new vision to spring forth constitutes the great challenge of our times.

A cosmovision does not constitute the concept of the world we construct (cosmology) as much as the vision we have of reality as it presents itself to us, as we see it in a vital relationship that constantly moves between objectivity and subjectivity. The cosmovision changes as our eyes are gradually opened to new aspects of reality, aspects that in turn modify our categories of understanding.

With regard to the cosmovision inherent in Christophany, we may begin with Jesus's nocturnal dialogue with Nicodemus. How is it possible to "remain"? How is it possible to be "immanent" in another (Jn 3:9)? What does this invitation to remain "in Him" mean? To remember it is not enough. Neither those who say "Lord, Lord" (Mr 7:21) nor those who pray with the mind and not the heart will enter the kingdom (Mr 15:8); it is not the rituals that count but "the Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:24). What vision of reality do these words presuppose?

Jesus's answer to "the teacher of Israel" (Jn 3:10) is as unsertling as the archangel Gabriel's answer to Mary (Lk 1:37). It does not include any discussion of ideas nor offer any technical answer to the question of how; instead, it insists on the value of immediate and direct experience ("We testify to what we have seen" [Jn 3:11]). Christophany is the fruit of such "seeing," which then seeks to express itself in comprehensible language and draws insight from tradition itself, the fruit of a perception of the phania of Christ.

The problem is of capital importance. I have already referred to the atheistic hypothesis of the superfluous God: after all, the universe functions, regardless of whether or not God exists. This transcendent, absent God is completely useless. The same may be said of Christ. If "the Mystery of Christ" leaves our cosmovision unchanged, it remains simply a private affair of "the faithful," with no real bearing on the world. Christophany's challenge and task are to present a vision of the universe

in which the Mystery of Christ finds its place. Otherwise, everything is reduced to pious and meaningless phrases.

The challenge is real. In what do we place our trust? In the words, for example, that rell us that Christ has risen, or in scientific categories that present the resurrection as a collective hallucination? If our "faith" is only belief in the words of others, it obviously cannot be accepted by the human intellect. If there has been a personal experience, however, it will try to find a suitable language that will be understandable only within a determinate cosmovision. In the hallenge is no light matter.

### The World of Interiority

The epigraph cited earlier may summarize all that I am about to say. Whoever in the past eventry centuries has heard about that young rabbi, either from John the Baptist, the latest popular preacher, from books or one's own mother, even from the stones themselves; whoever has heard the kengma—to express the idea in a more caademic form—has nor allowed herself to be discouraged by the unworthiness of intermediaries but, moved by grace or simple curiosity, has sought him out by asking him personally, noo µeven(-ubi manes—"Where do you live?" And she has heard the answer in her own heart: "Come and you will see for yourself."

Come—that is, follow me, observe what, in the depths of your heart, you know you must do and be; take a first step, begin with action rather than in the head; do not begin from what others tell you but come and then you will see,

What counts is the vision, the direct experience, as the Samaritans told the woman at the well (Jn 4:42). This is often understood as an ellists theology that contradicts many other invitations of the teacher, such as, "Come to me" (Mt 11:28); "let the children come to me" (Mt 19:14; Mk 10:14; etc.). This leads many to believe that the experience of Christ—and therefore, His grace—was reserved for the few who reach the heights of contemplation and that ordinary people ("the little ones") can neither go nor see anything.

But what is involved here? Above all, it is a question of "seeing," a personal experience, not a question of formulating a doctrine or even asserting that Jesus was a great prophet or the Messiah for whom the people awaited. It is not a question of elaborating a theology of Christianity—that is, the "reception," the impact Jesus made, as it was elaborated by the rich and multiform Mediterranean culture. If "Jesus made, as it was elaborated by the rich and multiform Mediterranean culture. If "Jesus this the same yesterday, today, and always" (Heb 13:8), then while respecting the authority of the seniores of every age, even we contemporaries, including those who belong to other cultures, have the possibility—and perhaps the right—to receive directly the impact of one who rejected neither the Samaritan woman nor the Syrophoenician nor the woman taken in adultery.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Guardini (1953) for a passionate and intelligent defense of this position.

It has always been said that faith is a gift, but we should keep in mind that those who receive it must also be conscious of its reception. Such a consciousness is neither a doctrinal evidence nor a rational conviction; it is an experience of truth (1 Jn 1:1–3), not simply trust in somebody else's experience—no matter how important and undeniable that experience is. In a word, faith reveals to us that the name Christ is not only the name of a historical personage but a reality in our own life (Ph 2:7–11). This is an experience that may be expressed in many and varied forms. Scripture itself confirms this when it asserts. "Nobody can say 'Jesus is the Lord' if not in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3; cf. also 1 Jn 5:1). The one who makes this assertion makes it because she has "seen" something—she has had an experience—not because she has learned something in a classroom lesson.

At the basis of faith, therefore, is an experience of union. I do not wish to be misunderstood. The word "experience" is ambiguous and polysemic. In this instance it is not a question of a mere psychological experience, but of an ontological "rouch," so to speak. It is an experience that transforms our entire being; we have a feeling that we have been taken over by a stronger reality that penetrates and transforms us. It is not yet the time to discuss what might be the criteria for establishing the authenticity of such a touch or the diverse forms this experience of human fullness might present.

Bur let us return to the question: What is seen? The evangelist who reports the question, "Where do you live? gives us an answer, as he plays on the same verb nine times in seven verses (In 15:44–10): Manete in me; μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί; "Remain in me." You no longer live with me as the first time, but in me, as intimately as I exist in the Source of reality and life." Jesus's entire eucharistic speech (In 6:22–70) is centered on the same verb: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (In 6:57).

This is the Mystery of Christ: the interpenetration, the perichöreist (circumintession Latin), as the church fathers would say, between the divine and the human, without forgetting that within the human there also exists the cosmic, as Jesus's entire speech here attests. Manete in 60 ("Remain in him"), John reasserts as the last counsel to his "children" (1 Jn 2:28). What is the meaning of this term, which Paul will later interpret as a "living in Christ" (Ph 1:21) and as "our life" (Col 3:4)?

The baptismal water poured on the head of many Christians has not reached the heart. A two-pronged road is thus opened that everyone must travel in accordance with the talents each has received: intellectual inquiry and inner journey. In other words, we must inquire of tradition who this Christ might be and at the same time

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> It is worth noting the near embarrassment of much modern exegesis in the face of meaning of this verb, so crucial in the Johannine writings, which contain 66 of its 112 appearances in the whole New Testament. In fact, how is it possible for one to "remain" in another person in an individualistic and rational cosmovision? We should also call attention to a wholly different current of thought in Berdyaev (1933): "At a greater depth it has been revealed to us that man does not save himself through Christ but in Christ" (97).

ask our own hearts what He might signify. Unless the first road is linked with the second we shall not arrive at an authentic Christian life—and shall remain at most catechumens. Two variant interpretations can lead us to the heart of what manere ("to remain" one in the other) could mean. We might call one anthropological, the other philosophical.

The first is the universal phenomenon of falling in love. The vision of the person loved is transformed, though others don't see what the person in love sees. In addition—I am speaking of a genuine falling in love and not of a more or less superficial infatuation—those who love each other in a certain sense live one in the other. The sufferings and joys of the one affect the other. There is an interpenetration that is *sui generis*; it is not simply a matter of "one single flesh" as Paul would say, but above all of one single spirit.

The second, which is also a universal phenomenon, can be expressed by saying that everyone is open to transcendence. Each of us has a certain consciousness that in fact there is something else, something greater than what we can grasp by sight. In the history of ideas, this opening to the transcendent is defined, generally speaking, as religious faith; the most common name used to express the term of this human experience is called the divine—and very often God. It has frequently been noticed, however, that something of this transcendence descends into the inner depths of Man and we speak of the immanence of the divine. God, the sacred, the numinous, or whatever we wish to call it, remains then in us—it is immanent. There is a manere of God in each of us. This creates a certain reciprocity: God is in us, and we are in God. Paul, echoing Greek wisdom, preached to the Athenians that in God "we live and move and have our being" (Act 17:28).

In effect, experience of the divine immensity is such that nothing can be admitted outside of it. Our manere, our "existence," is therefore in God. The relation between God and Man, therefore, instead of being one of pure transcendence (which does not admit any relation) is one of immanence. God is the transcendent mystery immanent in us. Hence there is a conviction common to different religions that someone who claims to have seen the transcendent God is not telling the truth. In the Sermo (117c. a. 5; FIP. 38.6631), St. Augustine says, "Si comprehendis, non est Deus" (Ifyou understand, it is not God), summing up the whole patristic teaching on the [un]knowability of God. It is in immanence that transcendence is discovered. We realize that we "remain" in something that, being within us, is greater than we are, transcends us. Mysticism speaks of this constantly. One need only cite the first (untranslatable) phrase of the Isia-upanizad: "Everything that moves in this changing world is annivened by God."

But this is not yet the Christophanic experience, which is neither merely "human" like the first nor exclusively "divine" like the second. On the contrary, the Christophanic experience reveals to us that, when they are authentic, the first is not merely human nor the second solely divine. In the Christophanic experience it is

<sup>4</sup> See Panikkar (1975a), 102-18, for commentary.

neither God who remains in us nor we in Him; it is rather a theandric or eucharistic presence that penetrates us and remains in us, and we in it. On the one hand, is similar to the anthropological experience of falling in love, but with a difference: the Christophanic experience is not a mere human presence. It is the human and the divine in a union that is unique. On the other hand, it is a mutual manere, which assumes the nature of the two experiences just described. Here, in experiential form, is what various doctrines later elaborate. The encounter with Christ partakes of the encounter with both the person lived and the divine. Without the falling in love, without the silence of the Abgrund (abyss), there is no Christophany—no Christic manifestation. Christian mysticism presents this polarity, which is not free of tensions. Those who are inclined to knowledge, to jūāna, will see the divine aspect; those more sensitive to love, to bhakit, will see Christ's humanity as central.

In this sense, Christophany presents its own peculiarity. It is neither a mere theophany nor even the loving discovery of being loved. More than a synthesis that makes us think of a Hegelian Außbebung of the two experiences, it is a nondualistic union, which in a certain sense constitutes their basis; the two experiences go orgether in life as well. Do not those in love tend to divinize the beloved? And is it not also true that even the most intellectual mystics tend to anthropomorphize the divine? The Christophanic experience does not split Christ's immanence into one part human, one part divine; it is an Adbuits experience.

Perhaps the scriptural model of this Christophanic experience is the meeting at Damascus (Ac 9:1ff.). Paul never saw Jesus with the first eye of the senses. His vision of the second eye (the mind) is that of a Jesus who betrayed the Law and thus deserved death. At Damascus the third eye (of the spirit) is suddenly opened, and he sees Jesus. It is therefore natural that, dazaled, he remains blind in the first eye until light slowly enters also into the second, and that later he will see with the third. After this transformation, which Jesus has come to effect, he will then be able to say that he has met the Christ in Jesus, and to speak with the authority of one who has seen.

Two examples from other religions are also worth reporting, although they also contain some differences. The Kṛṣṇa-bhakti offers something similar, though not the same. Kṛṣṇa is a human ſigure; interiorized and alive in our heart, he is immanent in us. But Kṛṣṇa is also an avatar, a divine descent, not an incarnation in the Christian sense. Kṛṣṇa is God in human form, not a Man-God, though in practice the differences tend to vanish. In Christian terminology this would be called docetism—which from a Hindu perspective makes no sense, since Vishnu is everything. The Kṛṣṇa of the heart, the living Kṛṣṇa is God who has taken human form, although this form is illusory.

In certain types of neo-Hindu spirituality the figure of the gutu could be related to the Christophanic experience, but here too the morphological differences are notable. Phenomenologically speaking, there may be many gutus, just as there are many avatars, whereas the notion of many Christs is contradictory, just as the idea of many Gods in a monotheistic sense is contradictory. There would be one sole God—though under different aspects. It is impossible to distinguish two supreme

and infinite beings, for then they would not be two. Even though at times he is called at-guru and jagat-guru, the guru in general does not pretend to be either unique or universal. The relation is very personal. The guru is what he is for the signa, the disciple; his role does not pretend to serve a cosmic function—although recently, perhaps due to Christian influence, this tendency has made some headway. Insofar as every experience is personal, it lies beyond all comparison. When we express ourselves in a language that aims at being intelligible, however, we must draw on ideas derived from tradition.

The eucharistic life constitutes the concretization of this experience. It is not without reason that an important partistic tradition, which persisted in the medieval period and even up to the modern age, saw in the Eucharist (certainly not in Communion, as some pretended) the drug for immortality and the condition for resurrection (Jn 6:54ff.). In the Eucharist, Christ is encountered in the same way in which one enters into contact with a person—physically. The Eucharist is material, yet at the same time is not any piece of bread or glass of wine, not even an anthropophagy. It is an encounter that is also spiritual. Nor is it accidental that the primordial religions know similar rites of physical contact with the divinity, even though under different aspects than the Eucharist. However this may be, in eucharistic spirituality, unlike the attachment to Communion, we find the theandric form of the manere, one in the other, as the texts explicitly warrant (Jn 6:33–58).

But there is something else in the Christophanic experience, and here I have to correct a certain piety, eucharistic as well as Christic. Stated in concise form, Jesus is not God but God's son and, as son, "equal" to the Father because the Father retains nothing for Himself. In our context, the manere of which we speak is a dynamic remaining 'that is also in a certain sense transient because, as ancient texts assert, Christ takes us to the Father and does not remain enclosed in us. We must remain in Him as He remains in the Father, and go toward Him. As almost all liturgical prayers conclude, per Christum Dominum nostrum: 'through Christ, by means of Christ.' Not even a profound human love closes itself up in the beloved but transends without leaving her or him. It is not an enclosed love, an amor turnus, as the Middle Ages would say, but a Trinitarian love. Certainly, when the falling in love is real, it possesses the power to make us love others as well. The discovery of Christs's immanence does not stop at our ego but catapults us toward the Father and from Him to the whole universe. As I hope to explain later, the Christophanic experience opens us up to a cosmotheandric experience

To sum up, Christophany is neither the manifestation of God nor a meeting with the human beloved. It is a unique phania, whence the visceral reaction against every comparison by those who have experienced Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, critical thought is legitimate. The best description of Christian self-consciousness is found perhaps in Paul's final doxology in Romans 16:25–26; Jesus Christ, who "according to the revelation, kept silent for eternal centuries (κατὰ ἀποκάλυγιν μυστηρίου

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See Panikkar (1963), "La eucaristia y la resurrection de la carne," 335-52.

χρόνοις αὶωνίοις σεσιγημένου)," and in Colossians 1:26, Paul says, "has manifested himself now" (νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη). This "now" is what we have at heart, and the following pages constitute an attempt to immerse ourselves in this light.

# Mystical Language

Much has been written about mystical language. It is right to recall the condemnation of Meister Eckhart and others for using phrases ut sonant (as they sound) without considering the context ubi sonant (where they sound)—forgetting, moreover, that words resonate (in our hearts) only where they "resound." This distinction implies that there is no objective language, sometimes defined as "literal," in the interpretation of texts, whether sacred or not. Howsover this may be, our linguistic observation goes beyond these polemics and would like to introduce an intercultural perspective, which is generally forgotten by the dominant modern culture. With the exception of poets, who are granted the right to speak metaphorically, such a culture utilizes language as a system of conceptual signs. It has been said of St. Thomas in late Scholasticism, formalissime semper loquitur divus Thomas (The divine Thomas always speaks in a rigorously accurate way). In that age, theology and even faith were discussed as if they were algebra. It is no surprise to find mystical language described—and by a sympathizer, nor an adversary—as obscurus, involutus, elevatus, sublimis, abstractus et quadant mens inflatus.

A brief look at another culture will be enough for us to realize that language is not a conceptual algebra that indicates the res significata in a more or less universal sense but rather a system of symbols that evokes in the listener a synchronization and a special participation—and a double effort by the reader who neither sees nor hears nor knows the person who writes.

"Is not the failure in clarity (Unklarheit) of the language of (German) speculative mysticism above all a failure in clarity in us?" asks a scholar who has an excellent mysticism above all a failure in clarity in us? asks a scholar who has an excellent knowledge of the mystical tradition. This does not mean that no criticism is possible or that a certain psychological empathy is not needed in order to understand the language of the other. It does mean, however, that every complete language is an objective-subjective, cultural and temporal system—above all, a system of levels of consciousness and knowledge. When traditional theology demanded faith in order to cultivate that science, it did not intend to exclude anybody out of elitist prejudice, but rather to remind us that, to use modern language, we must be on the same wavelength. Every expression that does not limit itself to repeating already established concepts and amusing itself with them but wishes to give visual shape to a profound experience must in a certain way create its own language, even if it be by means of words that have already been consecrated.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See the virtually exhaustive volumes of Haas (1979; 1996) on the status quaestionis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The words are those of the Jesuit Maximilian Dandaneus published in 1646; see Haas (1979), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Ruh, in Haas (1979), 80.

In the following pages I have tried to be as simple and clear as possible and have therefore avoided poetry and metaphor. Nevertheless, words are symbols, not concepts. A Christophany that takes into account the other religious traditions of mankind cannot accept the conceptual algebra of the West as a neutral and universal paradigm. After Parmenides we seem to have forgotten that concepts are only surrogates of the thing—of reality. Ideas of Platonic origin are accepted even though, when emptied of their ontological consistency (perhaps through their Augustinian translation into divine ideas), they become simple algebraic signs. 9

The meaning of language has been said to reside in its use—but on whose part? Naturally, on the part of the one who knows how to impose himself, that is, on the part of power. The language of the strong has become a weapon. A Christian discourse should be conscious of this use (abuse) by those who hold power. "We shall be asked to give an account of every word that is unfounded—and thus vain, without force" (βῆμα ἀργόν) (Μτ 12:36).

Mysricism possesses a more direct and immediate language. Let me conclude this introduction with a comment on a phrase of Sr. Teresa of Ávila that gave rise to a debate between her brother Don Lorenzo de Cepeda, John of the Cross, and other individuals and nuns in the absence of Teresa. The saint heard Christ speak the following words: Teresa, biscate en mt, biscame en tiio (Seek for yourself in me, seek for me in yourself). These words inspired a poem that seems to me one of the most beautiful expressions of Christophanic experience. I quore two stanzas:

Alma, buscarte has en Mí, Y a Mí buscarme has en ti.

Fuiste por amor criada Hermosa, bella, y ansí En mis entrañas pintada, Si te perdieres, mi amada. Alma, buscarte has en Mí.

. . .

Y si acaso no supieres Donde me hallarás a Mí, No andes de aquí para allí, Sino, si hallarme quisieres A Mí buscarme has en ti.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The displacement in the world of concepts (der Verschiebung ins Begriffliche) undermines the consistency (die Substanz) of the experience and transforms it into a mere name that then becomes a substitute for reality. See Jung (1963), 150.

See Martin-Velasco (1995), 119–48, for a very valid modern commentary.

<sup>11</sup> From Saint Teresa de Jesús, Obras Completas (1967), 500-501.

132 CHRISTIANITY

We seek below to translate these stanzas and to comment briefly upon them:

Soul, you must seek yourself in Me And Me you must seek in yourself.

. . .

You were created for love Beautiful, gracious, and thus In my heart painted, Should you lose yourself, O my beloved, Soul, you must seek yourself in Me.

But if perhaps you should not know Where you may find Me Do not go hither and thither, But, if you should wish to find me, Me you must seek in yourself.

In commenting on the poem, allow me to retain the form of the first person addressing another. Each of us is a pilgrim still on the way, a seeker, a "being" who is not yet, who is becoming.

Soul, seek, do not stop, do not deceive yourself: your being has not been achieved, is not perfect, is still unfinished.

This seeking constitutes the very dynamism of Life. It reminds us of the revealing phrase of Psalm 62:11 (Ps 61 in older Catholic Bibles), the Latin translation of which has been widely commented upon in Christian mysticism. The famous words are semel locutus est Deus, duo hace audivi. Teresa was given only one word (locutio): "seek." But Teresa heard two invitations: "seek yourself, seek me."

### Seek Yourself

All the wisdom of the world repeats: "know yourself," "ask who you are," "enter into your inmost self," "discover your heart." This is the invitation to the autophanic experience, to know the manifestation of the reality that we are and of which we must become progressively more conscious in order to become masters of our life: free, Free in order to reach our freedom—liberation, 50 teria, moksa.

#### Seek Me

Most human traditions invite us to open ourselves to transcendence. This human search does not end in ourselves. Instead, "seek God," "begin your journey toward

the infinite," "open yourself up to nirvāṇa," "leave yourself," "wake up," "move always abead"

This is the invitation to the theophanic experience, to know the light that does not come from us, that illuminates and transforms us—so that we may fully become what we are called to be. None of this is new, but Teresa heard more. She heard two other messages: seek for yourself, in me: seek for me. in yourself.

This is the Christophanic experience on which I would like to comment. It is not a tis is not a search for oneself in one's self, a more or less egocentric introspection. Still less is it a simple search for the other in a transcendence, a more or less total going out of ourselves. It is a search for ourselves in an icon that, because it dwells in our deepest self, does not allienate us: Christ is man like us, while He is at the same time infinitely superior to us. Christ is son of God, irradiation, splendor, ἀπαύγασμα, apaugama, of His glory (Heb 1:3), and therefore does not allow us to enclose ourselves within ourselves. We seek ourselves in seeking Christ; we seek Christ in seeking ourselves.

The buscate en mi includes three moments:

### "Seek for yourself in me—emptying yourself of yourself."

This is the beginning of a properly human life, of Life. Without this initiation we remain just a species of the genus animal; we have not yet been born into our true nature. Virtually all human cultures know rites of initiation into life, but baptism makes no sense for an animal.

To search for "Him" we must form an emptiness in ourselves. This act of selfemptying is equivalent to a death. Without this complete death to ourselves we cannot be resuscitated and we remain moribund throughout our temporal existence. It would be pathological to remain fixed in a negative, necrophilic, and perhaps even suicidal asceticism, yet without this first step, the monastic compunctio cordis. the Gospel's metanoia, or meditation on emptiness, there is no fully human life. In Christian terms, the removal of 'original sin' constitutes the beginning of true Life.

# 2. "Seek yourself in me by going out of yourself."

Otherwise you will not find yourself. Your identity, what you seek, does not reside in yourself (as an individual); you must go out toward the Other. You cannot seek me unless you abandon all that you possess—you must go out of yourself. But inasmuch as the other is Other, there is no road, there are no ways that have already been traveled and marked out. The great unknown cannot be sought as a known:

y por aquí no hay camino (going this way there is no passage), avijňātaṃ, vijnātāṃ, -ἀγνωσία, rayo de tiniebla, cloud of unknowing; the tao named is not the tao.

We cannot attain transcendence, but neither can we remain enclosed within immanence; we must open ourselves to transcendence—open ourselves only because we cannot cross the abyss without destroying it. Once again despair opens us to hope.

"How can this be done? I do not know man." I know neither the way nor the goal. Seek yourself in Me; I am this other; discover the unique Other who, not being strictly speaking other, allows yourself to be yourself—breaks your isolation while respecting the uniqueness of your being. And if you allow love to penetrate into you, you will discover that the Other is not another but Me—who is I.

You will discover in Me a microcosm—not a small world but the world in small, miniaturized. Then you will begin to discover the whole world in Me, and this discovery will make you at one with the universe and reveal to you, in Me, all the levels of reality. You can no longer think of yourself as alone. You are a microcosm.

Thus, despite the negative meaning that the expression has acquired over time, nihil mundani a me alienum puto (nothing in the world alien to me), it will become connatural to us, and the inner will not be an enemy to the outer, as is said in the Gospel of Thomas.

Man is a pilgrim, but the pergrinar is not the same as traveling toward a known goal, much less a touristic excursion in search of exotic sensations. Human life is the undertaking of a journey toward the risky adventure of being or nonbeing, as an upanizad says (astiti māstiti (Kath U.1.20). Abraham left Ur without knowing where he was going (Gn 12:1 Heb 11:8). "Go and leave everything you have" (Mr 19:21). All the literatures of the world speak of the same kind of adventure. It is necessary to go forth in search of the Grail, the princess, the treasure, heaven, the unknown, happiness—God.

# "Seek yourself in me—discovering Me."

Otherwise you will discover only a non-you. By discovering Me you will discover in Me a mikrotheos—not a small God, but God in a human measure, an incarnate God. The journey toward Me never ends.

The ultimate reality escapes us, yet we slowly glimpse the reason: this reality is in us also; we also are ourselves and cannot alienate ourselves—that is, escape from ourselves. We then discover that this Me is not extraneous to us, that we ourselves are involved.

At this level, objective knowledge is no longer possible: knowledge involves the subject as well. It is the mystical intuition, the vision of the third eye, the consciousness of the "realization" that never ends—in fact, is infinite.

God (the infinite, the reality, the absolute, or even nirvāṇa) is not an object of either thought or prayer. The third eye does not compete with the intellectual eye; it belongs to a different order. Not only do we discover the world of reality within us, but we also become conscious that we ourselves constitute reality. To consider ourselves "part" of this reality is a gross and overly spatial metaphor. We are, rather, images, icons, of the whole of reality. We lift the velamen essendi (Meister Eckharts' veil of being") in order to catch a glimpse of the microtheos that we are. We find a very beautiful image in Clement of Alexandria: "Everything that appears veiled contains greater truth... as the forms... become more attractive when they allow us to glimpse this gracefulness under light cunies" (Stromata V.9).

Here again we find a virtually universal theme. "The pearl is not far away, Noli fons ire" (Augustine, De vera religione 1.39n72 [P. 34:154]). The treasure lies under your house, close the windows and the eyes; "this is you, O Svetaketu" (CUV1.8.7, etc.). This Me is not an abstraction; it has a recognizable face. The lover discovers the heloved.

Bissate en Mf (Seek yourself in Me). But this is nothing but the entrance. Seek for yourself, you must seek yourself, you are obliged to seek yourself, to know who you are. But you must do this ourside yourself (this is why you are seeking), without leaving yourself—otherwise you will not find yourself but another, you will alienate yourself.

The adage γνῶ θι σεαυτόν, (a) gnosce te ipsum, "know yourself," is an imperative of human nature. We cannot, however, know ourselves as objects, because we are not objects. We should know ourselves as subjects, although full self-consciousness is impossible: the one that is known is not the one who knows.

You cannot seek yourself in things. They are not you, should you find yourself among them you would simply be a thing. Neither can you seek yourself in a transcendent God because this is not possible for you, and even if it were, God would no longer be transcendent or you would no longer be you—that is, your I. You must therefore seek yourself in Me, and this will allow you to be what you are. You must seek wourself by seeking Me.

This leads us to the second moment: what we seek cannot be elsewhere than in

#### Búscame en Ti

Here too we may distinguish three stages:

1. "Seek me in thyself12-as your deepest thou."

It is the pilgrimage toward the ātman (Śańkara), the search for Being (Parmenides), the journey to the promised land (Moses).

But in the beginning thou wilt not find anything that resembles Me. In thyself thou wilt find only egoism, littleness, limitation. And what if this were not thee? Hast thou forgotren that thou art "beautiful, graceful, painted in my heart"? If thou seekest Me in thee, thou wilt find this goodness, beauty, and truth that are in thee; thou wilt discover thy dignity and have trust in thyself. How can thou believe in Me unless thou believest in thyself, who is the subject of thy believing?

Human honor, the honor that in Teresa's Spain was so powerful, is neither pressige nor fame, as Aristotle, Cicero, and Aquinas believed, nor social reputation, however important that may be; it is the honor of the person herself, the dignity of each one of us. If we lose this self-esteem, this trust in ourselves, we will find it difficult to esteem others or to have faith in "God." It is for this reason that "seek me" comes after the "seek yourself." We cannot seek "God" unless we have trust in the one who is seeking. The "death of God" is the result of the death of the subject for whom God could be God. The crisis of our age is, above all, the crisis of Man, whom we have reduced to an economic factor in the great cogwheel of competitiveness. Although the "races" in St. Paul's 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 are not ours, we are still dealing with is somewhat infelicitous metaphor. After all, even in other Pauline texts, the victor is not the one who runs the fastest (Rom 9:16). In order to search for the pearl, the kingdom of God, beauty, justice, truth, in us, we must have that self-esteem that makes it possible to believe that there is something good in us.

# 2. "Seek me in thyself—as thy thou."

It is difficult to be convinced of our dignity even if we succeed in reaching this profound level: not everything is pure inside us. Mysticism runs the risk of idealizing Man and of forgetting the human condition. Our search for "Him" in us must not ignore the danger of a mirage.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> [Editor's note: We use here and several places in the following paragraphs the archaic forms of the second person pronoun "thou" to indicate conversion to consciousness of the personal depth dimension in oneself and God when we move to levels deeper than daily superficiality, in which we often treat God and both ourselves and others as "its."]

Seek me, seek me then as thou art; it is thee who seek me and thee who find me not as another but as a thou in the intimacy of your being. Thou discover me and speak to me as a friend, a beloved—that is, as a thou who is in relation with thee. Only after thou hast made this discovery wilt thou realize that the silence of this thou reveals something unsuspected. Thou hast conquered dualism because thou experience this thou as thy thou. But thou hast not overcome monism. I am not the

Neither monism nor dualism, reality is advitiyan, nondualist, as Chāndogyapaniṣad (VI.2) proclaims. Dialogue is a διά τὸν λόγον, a passing through the
logos, in the Spirit. If we seek the I in us, we can find it only in connection with
ourselves, not detached from us—that is, as a "you." We discover it as our "you." We
open ourselves to a life of prayer: we turn to "Him" as a thou. We pray to "Him" as a
you, we call Him "thou." The personification of what we seek and love is inherent in
human nature. To speak to Him as a you gives us a great sense of trust and security, as
the literature of the world attests. But this you seldom answers us, and almost never
directly. The first innocence is lost, and a fear arises that everything is a projection
of our unsatisfied desires. Influenced by too much psychology or depressed by "the
dark night of the soul," many become discouraged or turn back (Lt 9, €62).

# 3. "Seek me in thyself—as your I."

Seek me in thy thou because you will not find me outside of thee. It is I who say that thou must seek me in yourself. You have discovered me as a thou, but it is precisely this thou that turns to thee as its thou. Inasmuch as "I am" so "thou art," tat turn asi! Thou art mine, not so much as the property of a master or a creator God, but as thou art—precisely, my thou, and I call thee thou. Thou art dear to me, as the Gitt says. Thou art my daughter, as the Gospel says. Seek me, not as another, not as Two, not as One, but as the I who I am—who makes it possible that thou art—a thou, my thou. It is "thou" who art 'thee," not I."

We must make a mental leap: "He" is not another and cannot be such if I seek Him in me. The other is alienating, discouraging. The great danger is to abandon the urge to seek and to stop. This stopping is fatal. We stop when we renounce the journey, because if God is the Other, the goal is unreachable. This is dualism. But must the creature resign itself to being always a creature? Shall we never be God? Must we resign ourselves to live like Sispyhus?

Are we condemned to be no more than rational animals who must accept things as they are? Man rebels because he wants more. The serpent's ethoe, "You shall elike Gods," echoes today in our ears, and that aspiration has never been appeased in human nature. The second Adam, however, offers us an experience that is extraordinarily bold: "Thou wilt not be like God unless thou are called to be a son of God Himself, to be one with Him, to be totally divinized."

138 CHRISTIANITY

Dualism transforms this aspiration into a nightmare. The abyss cannot be crossed. Man thus becomes discouraged, weary of the pilgrimage that fails to satisfy his restlessness. Abandoning God, he throws Himself into the things of this world in order to establish the 'human city,' build a better world, dream about a lost paradise, and project his frustrated hopes onto the future. But this future newer arrives, and life is short. It is Marxism, perhaps, that has situated the last messianic dream in a historical future. Capitalism does not promise that future to everybody, but only to the winners in the ways of competition.

Insofar as God has withdrawn into transcendence, then, and abandoned Him, Man consecrates himself to working on things, turning himself into a master, and becoming the lord of all those things. This accounts for the rise of the powerful world of technoscience. At least a tower of Babel might have been built, a world government and other such things—while, of course, everything remains under our control. Finally, however, the human project, too, seems to collapse, just like the divine design of a Creator. The clamor of the winners does not stifle the cries of the slaves, the oursessed, and of all the holocausts of history.

Restlessness is intrinsic to human nature, and ever since antiquity those who believe themselves the best, in order to avoid the Carybdis of linear time, are caught up in the whirlpools of Scylla and engulfed by the abys of a divinity that negates the world, an abyss one can never leave. It is the monism into which the person falls who seeks to liberate himself by his own power, in which case the world is lilusory, or a least provisional, and personality is an enigma. The numm, edam, etw. is everything. Our pilgrimage would then be that of "the alone toward the alone" (Plotinus, Emmeads VI.16; VI.9.11). The "terrestrial city" is abandoned, but no residence in the "celestrial city" is established. This is disincarrate, acosmic spirituality.

In both cases, the dynamism and the search have ended. And as the seek me ceases, so does life. In the first case, man searches for himself only insofar as he is man, and succeeds only by becoming a good man. Ethics is turned into religion. In the second case, man turns into God and consoles himself with the belief that no "Consoler" is necessary now because he has already transformed himself into God.

This tension pierces the whole history of spirituality: either Man or God, either the humanistic and atheistic epiphany or the dehumanizing and monotheistic theophany. What is lacking is a mediator, a Christophany that is, at one and the same time, human and divine. Neither is Man the measure of all things (Protagoras, Fragment 1.b) nor God the metron (measure) of everything (Plato, Lauvr 716c; cf. Cratylus 385a6 and Theaeterus 152a2—4). It is, rather, the Trinity that is the measure, the metron of all things—as the Pythagoreans understood and Ficino, in his own day, recalled (De amore 1.1).

The seek me cannot be divided from the seek thyself, for the me and the thou are correlative. The metron is human and divine, the andric—indeed, cosmothe andric. This is the third stage, the discovery of the I. Here the Trinity or Advaita is central.

Thou art not I. "You" are a "thou" who is in Me, a "thou" that the I releases—by loving. Seeking me in thyself, thou discoverest that it is I who propel thee

to search in order to give thy Life in the seeking itself. Thou discoverest the I by being thyself, by being the thou of the I. It is the I and the I alone that can say ahambrahmāsmi (I am brahman), Yahwe ("I am who I am"); but thou canst say something much more than "thou art brahman," thou canst do something greater than pray to me as a thou, as thy thou. Thou canst unite thyself to me and, without ceasing to be thyself, experience the fact that thou art because I say "I am thee," even if thou cannot say "(I) am thee." At most, you could say "thou art I [the I]," but the "thou art" is not the "I am."

Then the mortal jump occurs. God is not the thou, my thou, my possession—as in so many forms of exaggerated, barely sane spirituality. I am not I, "my" I. God is the I. I discover myself as "thou," God's thou. God is the I, and I am God's thou. It is the I who speaks and to whom we listen—not as slaves, not as creatures but as children (children of the Son) in the Spirit. This is the Trinitarian life; this is the Christophanic experience: neither the mere dualism of creatureliness, the worldly, nor the monistic simplification of divinization.

What or who this Christ is who has spoken to Teresa is the focal point of this book.



# Part 2

# The Mysticism of Jesus the Christ

The Experience of Jesus

Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὄ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Have in yourselves the same sentiments

[a consciously lived experience] that is yours in Christ Jesus.

Ph 2:5



#### 1

### THE APPROACH

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes which we have seen with our eyes which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest (ἐφανερῶθη), and we saw it, and tesstify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest (ἐφανερῶθη) το us.

1 Jn 1:1-2

This passionate testimony introduces us directly to our theme. Twice its author speaks to us of Christophany, in both cases homologized with Life, "the Life that was in him and was the light of men" (Jn 1:18). Acceptance of this Christophany gives us the power to become "children of God" (Jn 1:12), and if children, we too can "hear," see," "observe," and "ouch" the "Word of Life."

It is a question of an experience that gives us the power of discovering ourselves and verifying what others say. Dionysius the Areopagite speaks to us of "the power of discerning odors" (Colesiis Hierarchia XV.3).

If we take John to be the author of our text, Christophany invites us not only to understand his testimony but also to have the same experience, so that his words may echo in us as well. After all, John's words are themselves the fruit of a meditation—the meditation of his eyes and hands. Many others have seen and touched that "manifestation" and have given the same testimony. This means that our situation is not entirely different from that of the early Christians. Faith in Christ does not depend on the latest papyri found at the Dead Sea. Like John, we too can "hear," "see," "observe," and "touch" the Word of Life. Christian thought, whether Latin or modern, has dwelt too little on the taboric light, a light that is neither

a hallucination nor an intellectual projection but the vision of an aspect of reality that still engages us today (see Mt 17:1ff.; Mk 9:2ff.; Lk 9:28ff.; 2 Pet 1:16f.). The "transfiguration" transforms the observer as well.

We shall try to describe this existential approach.

#### The Problem

### Prologomena

First of all, I should explain the sense in which I am using some key words. By mysticism I mean all that which pertains to the ultimate experience of reality. The ultimate experience of reality is the locus of mystical experience.

Reality is used here as the most comprehensive word that embraces all that which, in some way, enters into our consciousness—even the incomprehensible, the Non-Being, and so on. By ultimate I mean that which is irreducible to the intellect. Something is ultimate when it cannot be reduced to anything ulterior, when the sequence of ideas cannot be deduced from one more general certain, or when the intuition does not go beyond it. Plato would define it as "the principle without an ulterior foundation" ( $doy \dot{\eta} \dot{\eta} \dot{v} v n \dot{\sigma} \dot{\theta} e v o_i / a chief it as "the principle without an ulterior foundation" (<math>doy \dot{\eta} \dot{\eta} \dot{v} v n \dot{\sigma} \dot{\theta} e v o_i / a chief it as 'the principle without an ulterior foundation" (<math>doy \dot{\eta} \dot{\eta} \dot{v} v n \dot{\sigma} \dot{\theta} e v o_i / a chief it is ultimate for a given individual or group need be ultimate for all the others (contrary to Plato, who in Republic 511b defines <math>\dot{u} \dot{v} v \dot{\theta} e v o_i / a chief it is v o_i v o_i / a chief it is v o_i v o_i$ 

By experienc I mean a conscious immediacy—that is, the consciousness of something immediately present. In experience there is neither intermediator nor mediation. We might say that experience is rooted in the turiya described in the Māndikya-upaniṣad, from which as prime matter all states of consciousness are derived. Experience lies at the root of all cognitive phenomena, the senses, the intellect, or any other organ by which we enter into contact with reality—without specifying whether and to what extent reality is capable of existing as degrees of being or whether it is we who construct them. In this sense, any experience whatsoever is ultimate. Insofar as it is experience is cannot be derived from anything else or deduced from any other instance. The experience that I may have in touching a stick (which my eyes will see as broken if I submerge it in water in an oblique way) does not represent an ultimate experience for my mind inasmuch as that mind may interpret the entire phenomenon in a different way and ascribe it to various levels

For a brief but excellent synthesis of mystical phenomena, see Dupré (1987). For recent studies of Christian mysticism see Ruh (1990) and McGinn (1992).

The Approach 145

of reality or appearance. Is the snake that I see with my imagination on my evening walk—to use the classical example of Vedanta—truly a snake, or is it perhaps a rope that my mind reveals to me? Or is that which I believe to be a rope perhaps but a divine manifestation and not a rope at all?

The ultimate reality is therefore a reality that I cannot deduce from anything else. Mystical experience, therefore, means the experience of that which reveals to us ultimate reality as we have described it. But this is only a formal description; nor could it be anything else because it claims validity beyond any actual and possible interpretations. Let us leave open the question of what this ultimate reality might actually be; that is a postexperiential question. After all, ultimacy itself is relative to the journey we undertake in order to reach it. We are accustomed to speaking of "union with the divine"—through love or knowledge—or "contact with the sacred." Even if we share most of these descriptions within their respective contexts, we cannot limit mystical experience to either a theistic or deistic notion of reality, or to a religious phenomenon in the confessional sense of the word. In any event, the field of mysticism has little to do with paranormal or parasyxchological phenomena.

One problem we must first resolve is whether it is possible to speak of such experience. Every word must remain silent and dissolve itself, along with the minh that thinks it, says the Vedic tradition (see Taituripya-upaniyad II.91). Or, as the Christian and many other traditions declare, "In the beginning was the word," although the Beginning is not the word. The Beginning is Silence—that is, the Father from whom the Word springs forth, as the marryr St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote at the end of the first century (Ad Magnesians VIII.1 [PG 5.669]): "The one God manifested himself through his Son Jesus Christ, who is his Word coming our of the Silence" (Εἰς θεός ἐστιν, ὁ φανερώσας ἐαντὸν διά Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ἰτοῦ αὐτοῖ, δε ἐστιν αὐτοῦ Λόγος ἀπό στηνῖ ποροελθών).

In any case, we shall speak of this as we speak of silence.2

The field of consciousness is much more comprehensive than that of intelligibility. 
"Intelligence is nothing other than consciousness covered by the veil of ignorance" 
(Tripura Rahasya 21). We take account of the fact that, even though we do not 
understand it, the unintelligible does exist.

A second problem is whether it is truly possible to compare such different experiences—a problem that is complex precisely because the very contexts themselves differ. A "diatopic hermeneutic" is necessary—that is, an interpretation that transcends not only the temporal difference (diachronic hermeneutic) but likewise the difference in places (topoi), which have had no direct contact with each other, so that common presuppositions cannot be assumed a priori.

Since the time of Brahamabandhav Upadhyaya, and more recently Abhisiktananda, the question has been asked, for example, in the Christian sphere in India, as to what the relationship might be between the Christian and the Advaita religious

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Baldini and Zucal (1989), with an ample bibliography.

experience.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore necessary, above all, to describe the two experiences in their respective contexts: personal/nonpersonal, historical/nonhistorical, biblical/ Upanishadic, dualistic/monistics. We need to accept the fact that no comparison is possible between two ultimate experiences. Fivery question engages the person who poses it, and the answer is conditioned not only by the question but also by the questioner's parameters. Must we therefore abandon every effort at intercultural understanding? Not necessarily, so long as we remain conscious of the limits intrinsit to such efforts in their entirety. It is as if in every so-called experience we find ourselves in front of a cord with four threads: we are able to distinguish but not separate one thread from another. We touch one through the other, while at the same time ware in a position to identify but not isolate them. In fact, in every experience what we have is pure experience, that mysterious, spontaneous, atemporal, and nonreflective act by which we enter into immediate contact with reality. This experience is the font from which all the successive activities of our spirit originate.

In the second place we have the memory of this experience, which allows us to turn it into an object of description, analysis, and other acts. Here we see the appearance of the temporal. Memory makes pure experience present to our mind and, in a certain sense, enriches it, joining it with past experience and intensifying our consciousness of it. Memory allows us to speak of experience even though we cannot give it any meaning (2 Co 12:2-4 is 2 good example).

In the third place, there is the interpretation, the thought, the conscious analysis of the experience that memory mediates. This interpretation occurs in the light of the categories at our disposal. It is clear that at the moment in which we speak and reflect we are conditioned by our education, our idiosyncrasies, and our culture. We often tend to attribute to our interpretation a universal validity equal to that of experience itself.

In the fourth place, our interpretation is not exclusively our own; we are not alone but integrated within the complex context of an entire culture. We are intrinsically dependent on the space and time that have been given to us to live in. Our interpretations are traceable not only to the memory of our experience but also to the entire baggage of past experiences and corresponding ideas we have inherited from our personal and collective past, which may be said to act almost as feedback. The interpretations of others influence, willy-nilly, the understanding of our own interpretation. We may define all of this as the reception of our experience in the complex of the kinds of knowledge in which we ourselves are included.

In brief, where E is the complete experience and e is the totality of our experience, m is our memory of ir, i is our interpretation of experience, and r is our reception in the cultural sphere of our time and place, E = em.i.r.

<sup>3</sup> See Dupuis (1991 [1989]), 71-73.

<sup>\*</sup> See the illuminating chapter in Gort (1992), which analyzes in general (and sometimes in particular) the possibility of sharing the religious experience—though the case of Christ is not mentioned.

See Smith's polemic (1992) with Steven Katz, and the relevant bibliographical references.

Tue Approach 147

What are we asking, for example, when we posit the question of the identity or nonidentity of *Christian* experience and *Advaita* experience?

We possess sufficient data about e, m, i, and r, but we still cannot say much about E unless we know e, the first and most important variable. We know that even in the face of simple empirical experience, our descriptions can vary considerably.

In our case we can say that the traditional interpretations of the Christian and the Advaira Tact' certainly differ in the respective ways in which they are received. On the other hand, however, those who believe they have had the two experiences within their respective traditions discover that they are equivalent in a homomorphic sense. In both cases we "see" that reality is reducible to neither unity (monism, docetism) nor duality (dualism, humanism). The divine and the human are neither

In any case, our task consists not in comparing experiences but in studying the asserted or possible mystical experience of Jesus the Christ. In order to know the experience of someone, inasmuch as it is experience, we must participate in that experience. But how can we know we are doing this? We can know the different cultural environments; we can also discover that we have similar interpretations and even suspect that our memories reveal a certain correspondence; but can we go any tenther? Nobody can have an experience by proxy; it would not be an experience. Experience is personal. But might not faith be precisely this participation in the ultimate experience? Wight not the person be community more than individuality? Is not divinity infinite Life in eternal participation more than a supreme individual Being? If we intend to describe Christ's experience, we cannot ignore these great questions.

#### The Environment

The first draft of this text appeared on the occasion of a seminar in Rajpur in 1990 held in an ashram at the foot of the Himalayas. Christian and Shivaitic seperts in the knowledge and practice of their respective mystical traditions were present. I remember having noted at the time that, in preparing for the seminar, entitled "Shivaitic and Christian Mysticism," one indispensable paper was missing. I maintained that it was one on the mysticism of Jesus Christ. In my judgment, I said, there could be two reasons for the omission.

The first is positive and consists in a desire to respect a certain parallelism and safeguard a regime of parity: Christianity and Shivaism are two great ancient traditions that should be treated on the same level. Any kind of a priori prejudice that favors one or the other should be avoided. It would have been strange to present a paper on the mysticism of Shiva as God. Attention was deliberately centered on the experiences of his faithful, just as attention was focused on the mysticism of the disciples of Jesus Christ. If, however, the attempt to speak of Shiva's self-consciousness

<sup>6 &</sup>quot;The Supreme Experience," in Panikkar (1983), 291-327.

148 CHRISTIANITY

would make no sense, to try to describe Jesus's self-consciousness, however difficult,

There is no doubt that Christian mysticism is rooted, directly or indirectly, in Jesus's personal experience—something that cannot be said of Shiva's mysticism. The homeomorphic equivalence of Christ here would not be Shiva but his *Sakti* (energy, nower).

The second reason was rather negative. It explained that the absence of any study concerning the mysticism of Christ could be derived from the prejudice—on the whole, unconscious—of Christians. Their conviction that Jesus Christ stands above everybody and beyond any possible comparison makes them feel that it is better not to involve Him in any attempt at "comparative mysticism." Since the seminar was not specifically Christian, there was no a priori reason to consider Jesus in a way different from the great Shivait mystic Abhinavaguptācarya, inasmuch as both are historical figures. Considering Jesus as God, an anthropological or psychological analysis makes no sense, but since Jesus was also man we do not see why we should not study Him as such, as we would study any other man. It is for a good reason that it has been said that "Jesus, preacher of the message, has become Jesus the message preached." Indeed, most Christologies deal with the message and are based on Jesus's impact on the earliest Christian communities."

But is it possible to understand the message without understanding the messenger? We "read" what He said and study how others have understood Him. Perhaps this is the reason why Christian theology, except for the mystics, has emphasized personal experience so little. In this case, however, theology becomes only exegesis and interpretation.

Can we, or at least do we have the right to try to, relive—to a certain extent— Christs' experience so that our understanding will not be only an arbitrary subjective perception but also a reactualization of the original experience? St. Augustine, in *De utilitate credendi* (V.11), had already asked himself how we might discover the intention and meaning of an absent or dead author. This part of my work is, then, a Christian approach in silent dialogue with the mind and heart of the Shivaitic tradition. It is a Christian text that intends to make sense in a Shivaitic context, even though, writing in a Western language, we cannot

McGinn (1992), 62. The same observation is in Swidler (1988), 10–19.

<sup>8 &</sup>quot;The only knowledge we have of the Christ-event reaches us through the concree experience of the first local communities of Christians" (Schillebeeckx). This simply means that the problem is displaced, inasmuch as we find the same difficulty in understanding how the first Christians appropriated that experience. If we do not know the experience of Jetsey, we cannot even know the experience of Peter, Paul, and the first Christians. This only means that the problem has been displaced onto a second plane, which undoubtedly presents the same difficulty as the search to penetrate the experience of the first Christians. If we cannot know the experience of Jetsey, we can even less know that of Peter, Paul, and other contemporaties. See Thompson (1985), who honors the subtitle of his book—The Jetsu Debate: A Survey and Synthesis—which is centered, in any case, in "the Jesus event."

THE APPROACH 149

ignore the Western Christian sensibility. In fact, the Christian reader is the first interlocutor of this study.

A Christian reflection in an Indian context cannot neglect either the religious or the sociopolitical situation of contemporary India. A comparison may be suseful. The Christology of Latin America meditated and practiced by the so-called theology of liberation "cannot fail to give rise to certain suspicions," writes one of its leading exponents. "For some reason or other it has been possible for some Christians, in the name of Christ, to ignore or even contradict the fundamental principles and values that Jesus of Nazareth preached and actualized."

This study's Indian background is similar in part to that of Latin America. India's social structures and historical situation are perhaps even worse. The condition of dalits (the "oppressed") sums up what I mean, and this is a reminder that the problem is not exclusively Christian, though no Christian reflection can ignore it.11 A Christophany in India cannot ignore the fact of the dalit because of their special theological relevance. 12 Oppression and exploitation are world phenomena that no Christophany can ignore without contradicting itself. The problem of the dalit is all the more urgent because—not unique in history but important on the sociological plane—until today it has had a pseudo-religious justification. Though the Vedantic ideas of the world as nonreal and of karma as a fatalistic chain constitute subtleties or aberrations within Hinduism itself, a certain mentality has been widely diffused among the peoples of the Indic13 subcontinent, which increases the degree of tolerance on the part of both the oppressed and the oppressive system. We must not be scandalized by this, because even though Christ calls money mammon and tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, the current Western Christian mentality experiences little guilt in enjoying a standard of living that is heavily responsible for many structural injustices.14

To sum up, the environment not only refers to the bucolic coziness of the cultivated and peaceful inhabitants of an ashram but also includes a population more numerous than that of the whole of Europe, whose greater part live on less than a dollar a day and are giving signs of losing hope. And I implore the reader not to consider this reference a digression, even if it may give the impression of moving into a different sphere. Christophany, after all, intends to join heaven and earth.

<sup>9</sup> For the acts of the congress, see Baümer (1997; 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Sobrino (1978), preface.

<sup>11</sup> See Alegre (1995) and González-Faus (1995).

<sup>12</sup> See Pieris (1988) and Wilfred (1992).

We use the adjective Indic to refer to the culture of the subcontinent of Southeast Asia in order to distinguish it from Indian, the adjective that reflects the modernization of India.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> From time to time the West produces books that alarm the general public, such as Fanon (1963) or, more recently, Forrester (1996), Nevertheless, the great powers seem incapable of "dismounting from the tiger."

150 CHRISTIANITY

### The Starting Point

### The Text

Although most works on Christology ignore the topic, we intend to explore the mysticism of Jesus Christ. 15 We are attempting to enter into the most sacred recess of the human and propose to reach an understanding of a being whose nature is fundamentally self-understanding. Since human beings are different from all other objects of consciousness, we cannot understand them unless we understand how they understand themselves. Man is a self-conscious being, and Jesus Christ was also a man, one who seems to have appropriated for Himself and for others the phrase of Psalm 82:6, "You are gods," in John 10:34 in order that all "may participate in divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). In this light, the words of Sr. Paul in Ephesians 3:2 acquire a new meaning in comparison with the usual one. There "the stewardship of God's grace" consists in the fact that "the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (Ep. 3:6). In fact, this has been the most partial and intimate aspiration of every Christian—indeed of all people. For the desire to become infinite ("like Gods." Gn 3:5) seems connatural to Man. 16 Despite the real differences [between the two systems of interpretation). Jesus was not the only one to reveal to us the abyss of the ahambrahmāsmi (I am brahman)

How are we to proceed? Does a method exist that would be more or less adequate? To know how a person understands himself, should we not perhaps be that very person? Individuam ineffabile (The individual is ineffable) said the ancients. First of all, we do have a text, or betret, a series of texts that have been scrupulously analyzed. One might say that no other historical personage has been subjected to such scrutiny, of course, this inquiry aims high because our interest is directed nor at a text but at a person whom, nevertheless, we may come to know through a series of texts. Or is it possible to gain access to the mystery of the person in other ways? One thing is certain. Although texts are not sufficient, perhaps, for understanding and knowing the author, we cannot set them aside.

It would be wise for a scrupulous exegete to meditate on the liberating power of St. Thomas's sentence, "Omnis veritas quae, salva litterae circumstantia, potest divinae scripturae aptari, est eius sensus" (Every truth which, without violating the literal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Renwart (1993), who analyzes some fifteen contemporary works on Christology, though none of them deals with our problem. Kuschel (1990) presented an important work in narrative theology.

<sup>16</sup> Recall the subtle and vast polemic, half a century ago, concerning the so-called desiderium naturals videndi Deum (the natural desire to see God). On one hand, all thook gians agreed that God is the end of every being; still, on the other hand, there was a fear of evacuating the meaning and role of sanctifying grace—and thus of the whole of Christianity, should the mere natural desire carry us to a vision of God.

THE APPROACH 151

meaning of words can be adapted to sacred Scripture, also constitutes its meaning [Quaest, Disp. de Pot. 9.4, a 1]).

Even if we cannot at this time resolve the entire problem, we must mention it in order to overcome the nominalistic temptation to resolve human problems by reducing them to abstract parameters. However helpful it may be in some areas, algebra is not a discipline appropriate for anthropology or for a philosophy that is faithful to its name.

The traces of Jesus are clear enough: some thirty years of private life, and about three years—or perhaps only one—of intense public activity. We have the four Gospels as well as a limited number of canonical and noncanonical documents, and other events recorded in subsequent literature. We know, moreover, that Jesus's impact over the past twenty centuries has excited exalted apologetics and furious attacks—and a wide range of intermediate interpretations, as well as novels, films, and many works of art. All of this constitutes part of Jesus's image.

We know some of His words, many expressions that have been attributed to Him. several of His actions, and we can reasonably advance some conjectures concerning His more important goals. What emerges from all of this is a portrait that we can sum up briefly. Jesus was a man of Galilee who lived in a restless area in a small part of the world, marginal in terms of the political standards of the period. He belonged to a proud people with a millennial history that perceived an imminent catastrophe generated by an internal crisis, and especially by the domination of a powerful foreign empire. Whether He was Jewish fully or only on His mother's side, 18 Jesus supported neither the conservatism of the Sadduccees nor the extremism of the Zealots, nor the middle way of the Pharisees, nor that of the more esoteric Essenes. He stayed alone and experienced an immense compassion for the 'am ha' aretz, the simple people deprived of education and among whom He excited enthusiasm for a certain time. He was followed, without being much understood, by only a small group of men and women of different social strata, mostly of humble origin. All this happened almost two thousand years ago. He was then crucified by the Romans, at the instigation of some of His own people. At that time thousands of other men were crucified because they did not conform to the political status quo. Today almost all of them have been forgotten, except for the singular and fascinating person of Joshua, son of Miriam.

As to His activity, it may be said that He limited Himself to doing good to simple people, healing their bodies and souls, and preaching the forgiveness of sins. Only occasionally did He have discussions with cultured people; most of the time He preached to the humble. His most remembered words, the so-called Beatitudes, which seem to have been pronounced on different occasions on a mountain or a plain

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For the canonical sources of the New Testament, as well as for the noncanonical, such as the Apocrypha, see (among a host of studies) Orbe (1985) and the subsequent volumes in the same series. See also Crossan's useful "Inventory of the Jesus Tradition by Chronological Stratification and Independent Attestation" (1991), 427–50, with its 552 items.

<sup>18</sup> Rosenberg (1986), 27ff. and passim.

152 CHRISTIANITY

of His country, seemed beautiful even if a little ingenuous. To His more intimate friends, as He called them, He transmitted a more profound message that gave special emphasis to unity and intimacy with Him. He seemed to follow the rituals of His own tradition, even though He did so, it seems, with a certain degree of freedom.

The greater part of His doctrines remained within the range of Hebrew tradition, placing great emphasis on the love of God and neighbor, peace, and freedom. These noble teachings may also be found in many other human traditions. Some have nevertheless judged Him to be timid, a liar, a man who aroused expectations and promised spiritual rewards while knowing He would never be able to satisfy them Jesus, the son of Mary, has aroused hatred and love in both ancient and modern times. There are those who assert that He was Mary Mandalen's lover the secret father of John the Evangelist, a subtle hypocrite, and an astute scoundrel who had a secret political plan to overthrow both Romans and Jews and establish His fundamen. talist messianic kingdom. Others say that He was only a fanatical Jew, whose plans evaporated because Judas, the Sanhedrin, or someone else thwarted His actions. 19 Perhaps now we understand Jesus better through the fruits His followers have left. But even these fruits are ambivalent; we find both saints and sinners among His followers. We cannot, therefore, exclude a priori any possible interpretation, even though we are now defending our own thesis a posteriori by presenting a convincing picture of His personality.

#### The Context

The traces of Jesus's life were not left suspended in air but were impressed on Jewish soil at the time of the Romans, within a Semitic context of ways of thinking and confronting the world. The people He addressed did not come from Africa, Greece, India, China, Europe, Egypt, Babylonia, or Sumeria. <sup>20</sup> Jesus knew how to read and probably even to write, but He did not seem to have much knowledge of the vast world or of cultures other than His own. There are occasional echoes that may be traced to other traditions but could also be no more than factors common to human experience. As to His travels outside the country when He was young, every hypothesis is possible, yet besides the fact of there being no proof, it is diffusion for find clear traces of other cultures either in His words or His behavior. <sup>21</sup> Despite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See Haven-Smith's recent arguments (1997). It is surprising that, in his passionate and violent atrack against Christianity, Deschner (1990) barely mentions the figure of Christ, but simply quotes Goethe's phrase: "Among so many crosses and christs, they have hidden the true Christ and his cross."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> "Jesus did not show any signs of hellenistic influence" (Maisch and Vögtle [1969], 176). Several passages in *Sacramentum Mundi* (Rahner [1969], 3:174–209, with a rich bibliography) are worth consulting, as well as Crossan's descriptions (1991).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Consult four different yet correlative descriptions of the man Jesus: Ben-Chorin (1967), who describes Jesus as der Nazarener in jüdischer Sicht (and, incidentally, does not quote any of the expressions of Jesus we are about to examine); Swidlet (1988), who makes

THE APPROACH 153

this, His words and actions display both a non-Jewish and nonorthodox current. In fact, the evangelists several times suggest a certain detachment from the Jewish atmosphere and the customs of the people who gave Him birth. The more we make Jesus a Jew—as a certain contemporary current wishes to do for the commendable reason of eradicating the Christian shame of anti-Semitism—the more clearly does His distancing Himself from Jewish orthodoxy emerge.<sup>22</sup>

It is surely a positive sign of our time that Christians, starting with the pope, seek forgiveness for Christian anti-Semitism and that the Jewish roots of Christianity are underscored, but it is not enough to repeat the same syndrome of blaming others and to consider Pilate guilty and the Romans responsible. It seems that Christians are in no position to seek the forgiveness of "pagans" and those of other religions. I believe that this movement toward reconciliation with Judaism should constitute only a first step toward greater harmony with other religions as well.

In any case, Jesus cannot be understood without placing Him in His Jewish background, which was "popular" in the sense that there are no traces of erudition in it. He was neither a Gamaliel nor even a Paul of Tarsus, neither an Akiba nor one of the intellectual giants of His own tradition. Whatever "the quest of the historical Jesus" has meant in the Christian theology of the past two centuries, and whatever tension there might be between that quest and the "Christ of faith," it is impossible to understand the personality of Jesus the Christ if the concrete traits of a Jew who lived and died no more than sixty generations ago are negated or minimized. These sixty generations, however, have made a weighty contribution to both clarifying and obscuring the understanding of Jesus. Perhaps no other figure in history has been presented in more variegated forms.23 I am referring not just to the so-called lives of Jesus but also to all the epistemologies that have been advanced as the basis for every kind of theology, Christology, and ecclesiology.24 Is it possible to extricate ourselves from such a jungle?25 This context forms the thick texture in which the figure of Jesus appears. In any event, we cannot trace an image of Christ capable of establishing some kind of consensus. It is precisely this impossibility, however, that allows us to discover some traits in the "personality

the Jew Jeshua "the measure of what it means to be Christian," a Jesus who is, of course, both "radical and feminist"; Rosenberg (1986), who liberates Jesus from his descent from the Old Testament and presents him literally as barnasha (Son of Man); and Augstein (1972), who shows the incongruities of all the theologies and churches that build on the unstable foundation of a heterogeneous Jesus of Nararchi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See Vermes (1973), in addition to the other authors cited.

<sup>23</sup> See Pelikan (1987) for a fascinating description of Western history in terms of Jesus's positive impact on the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> See the sad and ironic description of a brilliant Indian excepte who died in an accident in 1995: "How many of the 1,500 articles and books published on the Gospels every year really touch on problems that interest people?" (Soares-Prabhu 1981, 320).

Notice the principal methodological question of BU III.4ff., according to which it is not enough to know an idea in order to know its author.

profile" of Jesus of Nazareth that transcend historical contingencies. Let me explain this by an example.

We can maintain that such a Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." We do not affirm either His divinity or madness, or even His irresponsibility. We say only that the traces of the historical or mythical Jesus, as they come down to us, bear witness to this assertion and that this affirmation discloses an experience that is central to human life.

### The Dustant

Knowledge of context is necessary for understanding any text, and this is an important factor in the diatopic hermeneutic insofar as the interpretations of contexts are governed by principles different from those that regulate the understanding of texts. We know, however, that inasmuch as every text is also a pretext to say something, it is necessary to study it is structure in order to discover the pretext that stands above and beyond the context. It is important to understand the pretexts insofar as they constitute an existential question that transcends the purely conceptual understanding of a text.

Confessing the existence of the pretext is even more delicate for the hermeneutic of the text and knowledge of the context. This is so because, on the one hand, it implicates us, too, and on the oher hand, the pretexts very often remain unconscious, veiled by interests, even by the interest of truth—a truth, however, that we more or less "intuit." What has been the pretext that has spurred Christians to interpret the man of Nazareth as they have?

Our inquiry must acknowledge that our personal eyeglasses have delineated the form of the Jesus that we see, while our being conscious that we wear glasses and have an idea of how they both form and deform the image allows us to attribute to our description the necessary qualities of uncertainty and variability. This may permit us to create a concrete picture that might convince a certain number of those for whom the name of lesus is no light matter.

Our question was whether we are capable of penetrating into the deepest recesses of another person or whether we must content ourselves with acting as an investigator who simply reconstructs a past event? The ultimate question is whether Christian faith is based exclusively on the trust placed in those theologians and investigators who reconstruct the traces of the historical "founder" of Christianity, or whether it might originate from another source as well. Is Christian faith founded on a historical book or on a personal experience? The fundamental issue is whether it is something like grace or simply the proper conclusion of a syllogism.

I would not like to be misunderstood by Western Christians who believe in the myth of history. It cannot be denied that Jesus was a historical individual who lived two millennia ago, although it serves no purpose to ignore the fact that in many parts of the world, and for the next Christian millennium, the figure of Christ could make sense also if seen under another light. Using traditional Christian expressions,

THE APPROACH 155

it could be said that, if Jesus was a Jew, the resurrected Jesus—that is, the Christ—is neither Gentile nor Greek nor Jew. I do not wish to engage in theological controversy; I simply intend to understand the figure of Christ in a context wider that the Semitic and the historical. Is a circumcision of the mind necessary in order to understand the man of Galilee when His closest followers had already rejected the circumcision of the body (Ac 15:1–28)?<sup>26</sup>

I would like to reassure Christians that they will lose nothing of the profundity of the Christian tradition by renouncing a certain monopoly of Christ. My interpretation is orthodox—unless one identifies orthodoxy with microdoxy. I would also like to assure those who do not participate in the Christian creed that no profundity of their respective traditions would be lost by considering the figure of Christ as homeomorphic equivalent to "that which" other cultures express and understand in a different way. The great difficulty, philosophically speaking, derives from the substantialization of this "that which." Homeomorphic equivalence certainly does not signify religious equivalence.

One may object that inasmuch as the context proper to Jesus was the Hebraic world, we are not allowed to extrapolate from it. However, the first generations of Christians, starting perhaps with John and culminating in the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, already transplanted the context into the Hellenistic world. The possibility of a further intercultural transplantation, therefore, should not be excluded. It may be objected that we are no longer in the same situation as that of those more formative periods. I would answer simply, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and throughout the centuries" (Heb 13:8). In other words, I am neither denying history nor indulging in a "Gnostic" interpretation of Christ. It is precisely because history is very important that it must not be reduced to the past. "21 am not presenting a complete Christology but simply a nondocetic realistic Christophany.

Here then is our pretext, which our confession of faith makes more open and flexible. We have believed in Christ through many and necessary mediations and would now like to describe this experience by returning critically to those very mediations. The Christian tradition is neither merely doctrinal nor exclusively historical. The history of Christians, and thus of Christianity, is rich with both light and darkness. It is true that a lotus flower may be born of a quagmire, but it is also true that we can be pricked by a splendid rose.

The principal question, therefore, remains suspended. Although we surely cannot do without the text, are we able to penetrate it without remaining imprisoned, as

<sup>26</sup> See Panikkar (1992).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Dupuis (1994) comes very close to our problem since he presents a Christology both centered on the person of Christ and open to the other religions of the world. He criticizes dogmatic and genetic methods as deductive and finds a hermenuical triangle "in the mutual interaction between text, context, and interpretation" (9). This allows us to "turn to many diversified theologies and Christologies" (10) so as to prepare "the way to a Christology of religions."

Buddhists would say, in sterile subtleties or pernicious opinions?<sup>28</sup> How can we find an orientation in the complexity of contexts?

The Christian answer is clear. The orientation is found in tradition, which furnishes us with the pretext that provides the interpretative key. To use consecrated terms, tradition, along with the Scriptures, is an indispensable hermeneutic instrument even though, like the Scriptures themselves, it is polysemic as well as fluid and alive. The protext is never purely objective.

Too often tradition is considered a complex of doctrines that have been crystallized into dogmatic formulas that interpret the scriptural texts. We then find ourselves with a kind of doctrinal Christianity, almost an ideology, patched together on the basis of some historical facts that successive generations have interpreted. The result is a body of doctrines, a system of beliefs similar to the constitution of a state or the rules of an institution, directed at promoting cohesion, discipline, and efficiency. But can religion be nothing but an organization? Is faith no more than the correct interpretation of doctrine?

Člearly, tradition means much more than this. The "transmission" (tradere) of tradition is not limited to producing a version of Scriptures that is correct, in proper form, and up to date. What tradition transmits is life, faith, a sense of belonging to a community, an orientation of life, a participation in a common destiny. Christian tradition is not doctrine alone; it is also ekklēsia in the deepest sense of the word. It has to do not only with what releass said and did but with who He was and who we are.

Tradition is more than an authoritative or normative hermeneutics. It offers more than a next or interpretation. It transmits a word that is living and therefore spoken. The intention and even the nature of our texts go far beyond what a historical-critical method succeeds in extracting from them. But how do we know this? A certain kind of exegesis governed by apologetical precexts (which is not our case) has sought to convince us that the texts themselves bear witness to their own intention and nature. But if the text validates itself, we fall into a vicious circle and the testimony is not valid. The pretext can never serve as foundation: it would not be reliable. The text itself must therefore be founded elsewhere. But the general acknowledgment of the hermeneutic circle (according to which we need a particular precomprehension) cannot satisfy us since we are already familiar with other kinds of precomprehension that are of equal value and that challenge our interpretations. In brief, we need something different, something that precedes all the scriptural texts.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> This study does not intend to be a repudiation of biblical criticism. However, although we must become familiar with. Christian exgessis, it is also necessary to heed the observation of Soares-Prabhu (1981): "For it is precisely this use of an historical method to interpret a religious text that explains the failure to reveal the true meaning of the Gospels, while providing an infinite amount of information about them…... A specific method is used to obtain exact information for the purpose of interpreting a text that aims at personal transformation. The method is inadequate for the intention of the text." (318).

<sup>29</sup> At an international congress I asked a well-known exegete how, with his purely analytical premises, he explained the fact that he was more interested in Jesus than Socrates

THE APPROACH 157

In order not to lose the thread of our argument, we shall not pause to deal with the "hermeneutic circle" and its complement, the "hermeneutic center" that every circle presupposes, nor on that hermeneutical modification that is called "hermetic." <sup>10</sup>

It is certain that no book can constitute the ultimate foundation of any faith, since it is precisely faith that is needed in order to give the book the value of witness. It will be said that the book does not mean Scripture but what Scripture says. In that case, we must ask: Who tells us what Scripture really says? The teachers, many traditions answer. But how do they know it? And how are we to recognize the genuine teachers?

"Aνάγκη στήναι, the Greeks would say, "It is necessary to stop," to find a foundation, which in fact is the Word: "God was the Word" (Jn 1:11), as is said in many traditions. On this point, incidentally, Vedic exegesis could be helpful. The Vedas, in fact, constitute the primordial word. There is no one to tell us the meaning of the primordial words because we would then have to use other words or signs ad infinitum. This is the meaning of the traditional apauruseyatum. That is why mimāmā is considered atheistic. The word is primordial: "In the beginning is the Word. The Word was with [i.e., "near"] him" (TMB XX.14.2). "The Word is brahman" (BU I.3.21). The Palestinian Targum also renders Genesis 1:1 with an almost Trinitarian phrass: "From the beginning, the mēmā [word] of YHWH created and finished the heavens and the earth with wixdom."

But this word, vāc, this logos, mēmrā, must be listened to: "Faith comes from hearing" (Rom 10:17). This hearing entails a reception in the heart and mind that assimilates the word. Such a listening to the word unleashes experience, the experience of faith. Let us not forget that the Word is the ecstasy of Silence.

We may perhaps simplify this idea by affirming that, although the Word is not Scripture, it can act as its vehicle.<sup>31</sup> The Word is not reducible to Scripture nor even to interpretation. This suggests that the "apostolic succession," to invoke a traditional term, is more than a transmission of doctrines. In brief, the pretext is a transmission of life. The purpose of studying philosophy, Indic wisdom says, is salvation, liberation; it is not only the end but likewise the means. We must aspire to liberation (mumuksu) and undertake our journey toward it with a conscious and attentive eye.

or Buddha, or even Copernicus, Hannibal, or Napoleon. The only real answer was "the reason of State—that is, the politics or power and its influence." If we climinate the personal and mystical fact that we find something else in Jesus—which must also pass the test of critical reflection—no reason is left for justifying our interest in Jesus more than in any other "hero."

<sup>30</sup> See Klostermaier (1997), who cites Rombach (1991). It is not by chance that Klostermaier derives his "inspiration" from a profound knowledge of Indian traditions that opens him to dialogue and interculturality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> As von Balthasar (1961b) puts it, "Die Schrift [ist] nicht das Wort, sondern das Zeugnis des Geistes von Wort" (Scripture is not the word but, rather, the testimony that the Spirit gives the word (1;28).

## Three Anthropologies

Let me ask our question again. About two thousand years ago there was a man who, in comparison with other great figures of history, was not particularly extraordinary. He was an honest and just man who did not let Himself be dragged into any extreme position, either political or religious. Nevertheless, this man died young because He outraged those who held power because of His inflexible attitude against hypocrisy and His transgression of the religious laws of His people. Finally, He was condemned to death.

In the two millennia that have passed since His death—or, as many prefer to say, His resurrection—He has inspired millions of people, has been a central reference point, and has affected the course of history as no one else. He did not write a single word, but only spoke and acted, and a handful of simple men and women gathered in His memory to commemorate His death and life. What did this man think of Himself? Is it not perhaps blasphemous to dare to enter into a person's most intimate sanctuary? Yet if He has been the central symbol for so many people of so many different backgrounds for so long a time, we should have the right to ask why, and to seek to penetrate His mystery. Ye To this reason, we must ask ourselves who this man is.

If Jesus Christ signifies something for the Christian tradition, it is because, in one way or another, Christians sense (Jn 6:68) that He spoke "words of eternal life," and did not simply make correct assertions about the state of the world. It is therefore imperative for us to understand the man.

"What do the people say of 'me'?" Jesus asked. Note that if we translate the Greek original literally, we avoid the ungrammatical "I" (Lk 9:18; see Mk 8:27 and Mt 16:15).

Before the predicates of the famous response of Peter ("Messiah," "Son of God") we find the genuine subject— $\sigma \dot{v}$ , "you" ("You are..."). We need to open our eyes and ears to the mystery of the "thou." He asks about his "me," and the response says, "Thou."

To be understood, this "thou" requires a vision of the man. Let us approach the problem in the light of a threefold anthropological paradigm: Man as individual, Man as person, Man as image of the divine—even if this threefold distinction is not the only one possible.

Above all, we shall describe Jesus within the modern individualistic framework. Second, we shall offer some reflections within a wider Western thought structure. Third, we shall mention the Indian reception of this problem, one that recovers, it seems to me, a vision that is in wide agreement with the original Christian intuition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> It is not surprising that Adolf von Harnack, a theologian whom many keep at a distance, wrote that "the important thing is not to evoke in ourselves the same sentiments as Christ but, rather, to grasp Christ himself" (quoted in Kuschel 1990, I, 2, 2).

#### The Individualistic Approach

That Jesus was a historical person is undeniable, even though some passages in Scripture and some traditions refer to Christ as a generic man, a second Adam in whom the whole of human nature is assumed. But what is an individual—an isolated substance? Today's dominant culture, especially that of Western origin, presents Man as an individual entity. Since individualism is one of the most profoundly rooted myths in contemporary consciousness, it is extremely difficult to challenge. In some cultural backgrounds, individualism has become taboo.

Within the ambit of an individualistic anthropology we find a unique access to the holy of holies, to the mystery of individuality: although we cannot cross the threshold, we can surely observe the traces that the person in question leaves when he breaks out of his atomistic monad. These traces are discovered by an inevitable though inseparable threefold mediation: What do these traces in se and per se reveal about this person? How do these traces present themselves where they are found? And what kind of form do they assume if they are examined through our personal lenses? We consider then

- a. The words and works of the individual as indices of the person himself.
- Words and works that are said and done within a concrete context (which confer meaning and value on them).
- c. Our interpretation of the above by means of our particular vision, which in turn is influenced by a series of propositions without which we cannot confront the investigations of the traces.

Here we confront three obstacles that must be overcome. These formidable dragons defend the intimate castle of private individuality—or, as individualists will say, "the sacred nature of Man."

The prospect does not seem very promising. The traces, which the Latins called vestigia, are ambiguous and ambivalent, as their immense variety indicates. The traces are not the image. In order to recognize something as image, it is necessary in a certain way to "know" the original, although the original remains enclosed within the fortress of its individuality. We can therefore readily understand the desire to conquer this fortress. The undertaking, however, is formidable.

Even if we should succeed in lowering the drawbridge that gives access to the castle of individuality, nobody would believe us unless we are able to present credentials that can be verified only if we prove we have penetrated to the heart of that castle.

<sup>3)</sup> Eckhart offers an example of a discussion that was very much alive in his time: "Deus verbum assumpsit naturam, non personam hominis" (God the Word assumed the nature, nor the person of men [In Johannem, LW 111 §289]), and immediately adds, "Nature as nobis omnibus aequaliter communis cum Christo univoce" (Nature is equally common as an univocal form, between all of us and Christo).

160 CHRISTIANITY

Such credibility can be guaranteed, however, by the moral and intellectual qualities of the witness, as a Christian "apologetic" has amply demonstrated and Indic philosophy has studied in a thematic way.<sup>34</sup>

But something more is required. It is necessary that we understand in some way the language of the testimony, that it speak to us in a human tongue. To continue my analogy, the castle cannot remain the private property of any individual but should be accessible to all of us as well, so that we may "weify" the testimony. In short, our hearts must burn with the same fire (see Lk 24:32), or confess that we believe "because we ourselves have heard and understand" (Jn 4:42). It is only within ourselves that we can meet—and perhaps understand—the mystery of someone else identity. Seen if we should succeed in lowering the drawbridge that allows us access to the castle of individuality, I can know the identity of another only as I share his identity. See Yerything else is nothing but bureaucratic identification, not true identity, as we shall see again in part 3 of this book.

Identification consists in placing the other within a system of coordinates in order to avoid confusion with any other being. Every being is thus defined in a univocal way. In our case we could define Jesus of Nazareth as the Jew, the son of Mary, born most probably in Bethlehem in 4 BC, who, after a few years of activity in His own country, died on a Roman cross in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate. Such identification at least leaves no doubt about whom we are talking. But are we sure we have succeeded in reaching that individual's identity? Have we succeeded in really knowing Him? Have we penetrated His personal intimacy. His self-consciousness, what He really thinks of Himself? Identification is not identity. In order to approach someone's identity, we must appeal to another type of approach that goes above and beyond the first. We need a knowledge impregnated with love; otherwise we touch no more than the what and not the who for the person.<sup>73</sup>

In phenomenological terms, love is a nondualistic experience. <sup>38</sup> This is the reason why it is only with great difficulty that love enters into any Husserlian noëma (understanding). Love is neither equality nor otherness, neither one nor two. Love requires differentiation without separation; it is a "going" toward "the other" that rebounds in a genuine "entering" into oneself by accepting the other within one's bosom.

Without love we may be capable of "identifying" an object to a certain extent, of localizing it, of describing its aspects and foreseeing its behavior. This is so-called scientific knowledge—which is not knowledge in the classical sense. In our case,

<sup>34</sup> Consider the category of the "trustworthy witness," so widely studied and discussed in Indic philosophy.

See two important theological works on which we cannot comment here: Chatterjee (1963) asserts that without the previous condition of intersubjectivity "there can be neither the concept of 'my' self nor of the 'other' self" (217); Ricoeur (1990) distinguishes between identit-idem ("same" or gleich) and identit-ipse ("self" or Selbst) (13 and passim).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> See Panikkar (1977).

<sup>37</sup> See Panikkar (1972b; 1972c).

<sup>38</sup> See Panikkar (1983), 277–89.

however, we aim not at an identification of the object but at knowledge of a "thou" who is himself a knowing subject. In order to accomplish this end, I must know myself in such a way that there is space in me for "the other," so that the other is not only someone "outside" but a certain "other-than-me," an "other self"—who perhaps, like me, participates in a unique "Self." In any event, in order truly to know the "other," the movement must be reciprocal—a meeting must take place. I must be loved by the other so that I may be enabled to see him in the mirror in which to love of the other has transformed my very self. Christian Scripture ays, "If one loves God, one is known by God" (I Cor 8:3), "I will then understand fully in the same way in which I am understood" (I Cor 13:12).

Virtually all human traditions have insisted on purity of heart as an essential requirement for knowledge and for leading an authentic life. "Only a sadydaya (man with heart) is capable of grasping the power of a certain phrase, as Indian poetry says." Only the pure in heart will be capable of truly seeing the "other," the "others," the "Other," 60d. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mf 5:88). This is what John says, too: "And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 Jn 2:3; see vv. 4–14). If our praxis is correct, our theory finds the right path. In the same part of his letter John repeats, "I write to you, my children, because you have known the Father" (1 Jn 2:13–14). Therefore we, too, can know Him. The heart of orthodoxy is orthopraxis.

But is this really possible? Can we really cross that drawbridge? Can we open the innermost chamber of our selves to make room for another "self"? Can the "fusion of horizons" that Gadamer speaks of (1972, 289ft.) as indispensable for an authentic understanding bring about a fusion of many selves without generating confusion? Or must we remain respectably on the threshold of the self-consciousness of others and content ourselves, like Job's friends, with listening and looking? Christian mystics have spoken of the necessity of becoming an alter Christus (another Christ). In proposing here to arrive at the ipse Christus (Christ Himself), we are encouraged by St. Paul's exclamation: "It is no longer I who live [i.e., my ego], but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

For an individualistic anthropology to dare to enter the "other" and penetrate into his intimacy would be a violation of the individual's dignity.

Once we have banished love from knowledge, the other becomes an object, a stranger, a thing. This leads to Sattre's extreme formulation—*lenfer sont les autres*—on, more benevolently, to considering them as an obstacle or an enemy. To escape this difficulty, a distinction is usually made between the *aliud* (the *id*) and the *alite* (the "other"). The *aliter* is not another *thing* but another *I*. In the face of this "other" we enjoy rights and obligations. We must love the neighbor as an "other," as another *I*, not as a thing. To this end we need, above all, to overcome an ethics

<sup>39</sup> It should be enough to mention the Upanishadic requirement for studying the sacred word; for just one example, see Sankara, Vivekacudamani, 16-37.

<sup>40</sup> See Gispert-Sauch (1974), 39, for a brief but important study of biblical exegesis from an Indic perspective.

of exteriority—a civilization founded on law. Metaphysics becomes irrelevant, and ethics its substitute. 41

For our purposes, then, we must abandon the idea of "knowing" the "other" and learn to respect him. Alienation is born as the aliud swallows us up, because we have not known how to acknowledge the alter with the human face who stands before us. We cannot go beyond this: entry is forbidden.

Loving knowledge, on the other hand, discovers the you, not the other. If Jesus is another and not a you for the I who seeks to know him, it is impossible and blasphemous to try to penetrate His feelines, as Paul invites us to do (Ph 2:5).

A brief critique could say that the problem of the other is not so much that of the other as it is of the self, of the ego. In order to appease our bad conscience, which is always preoccupied with the ego and not the other, we maintain that the other is an other individual for whom we acknowledge the right to have an "!."

Here an elementary respect for grammar could help. I cannot say "I" unless I refer to myself. What we call an "other I" is, strictly speaking, an abstraction. For me he is not an I but a he or a she or an it. Yet I cannot say "you" without abdicating my "I." I cannot call the I of the other "I"—it is not my "I," it is not another "I," none of them is "I." The others have their rights (which are not mine): I must love each of them as an other myself but not as if he were myself. As the adage we cited above puts it, Individuum ineffabile (The individual is ineffable). In that case, everyone would then become a competitor against everyone else.

The old saying that Plautus reported in Asinaria 495 and afterward explained by other philosophers has it that homo homini lupus (Man is a wolf to another man) is neither simply immoral nor socially pernicious; it is a thought that is erroneous in both an anthropological and metaphysical sense. We are not wolves that have evolved, even though we may have instincts that are called "animalistic," inasmuch as when we act on them we have in fact lost our humanity. Completely other is the classical wisdom that we find in Erasmus without any further comments, homo homini deus "Man is God to another man [Adasia I.1.69]).

To ask how we can know another individual, therefore, or even dare to penetrate the "holy of holies" of another human being s intimacy, constitutes a false question. Or better, there is an inner contradiction between being an individual—indivisum a se, ab aliis vero distinctum (an individual andivided from oneself and distinct from others)—and knowing another individual as such. I would cease to be the individual ant at an iff it should truly come to know another individual as individual, and vice versa. The individual who knows or inserts himself into the other would destroy the individuality of the individual known and would then cease to be the individual he individual for other would destroy the other and alienates the knower. We are talking about the true knowledge of another I, not of our capacity to predict behavior and control events. We are referring to the knowledge that achieves a certain identity with the object known; we are talking not about knowledge of so-called inanimate entities but about the knowledge of an "other."

<sup>41</sup> See the work of Unamuno, Sartre, Lévinas, and Aranguren, among recent moderns.

To sum up, what I am saying is that if each of us is no more than an individual, it makes no sense to pretend to penetrate another's ego.

Until now we have presented the problem in the light of the modern Western dogma of individualism. But we are not a saying that this notion should be understood as asserting that each of us is a windowless monad. After all, we could be monads who stand in relation with other individuals, although such a relation would be external. Since every monad is but a number, the most practical rule would be to respect the group that is the most numerous, so that the majority, driven by a desire for peace, will dictate a judicial system of behavior. Nothing is higher than an individual except a larger number of individuals. We are all enclosed within our own castles; the individual mineffailt is supreme, a little God. The monotheistic God becomes fragmented into small Gods. Could this be the origin of democracy?

This myth does not in fact represent a universal conviction. Even Wessern thought has begun to entertain serious criticism of this interpretation. Each of us, to be sure, has an individuality, yet we are more than individual entities. The dominant contemporary culture, Western in origin, seems to have exhausted the advantages of individualism, and some who belong to this very culture have begun to discover that such a position leads to a philosophical solipsism, sociological atomism, a political quantification of the human being, and therefore to isolation, to consumerism, and to an undeclared war of all against all: Home homini competitor.

It is in this climate that we find modern reflection on the *bumanum*, a reflection whose most positive achievement consists in the new emphasis on the person rather than the individual.

## The Personalist Approach

Our intention is to share Jesus of Nazareth's self-consciousness, a particular case of the general problem of achieving the "interpenertation of consciousnesses," as suggested in the first part of this book describing the Christophanic experience. Are we so certain that every individual consciousness is an unassailable fortress? Will not the true cogito (I think) be a cogitamus (We think) and the sum (I am) a sumus (We are)? And again: Is it really certain that Being is something dead or that the idea of reality as mystical body or dharma-kāya is no more than a way of speaking? Is not Being rather an activity, an act? Are we really convinced that consciousness is just an individual epiphemomenon, a completely private property?

We are not even sure that the problem of how to know an other has been correctly presented. Here we touch on one of the principal philosophical questions of our times. One could adduce the example of the subject-object separation at either the epistemological or ontological level. Even the vision of the anima mundi, with all its related political and ecological consequences, is connected with the same question. It is the problem of personalism and an animistic vision of the world.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The reader may at times hear the echo of a great number of contemporary philoso-

We may describe the person as a knot in a web of relations. In such a perspective, individuality is no more than the abstract knot cut away from all the threads that contribute to make it up. The knot without the thread is nothing, and the threads without the knot could not subsist. Knots serve a very practical function; they provide effective ways for referring to human activity, from identification cards to the human rights of the individual. But a knot is a knot because it is made up of threads tied together with other knots by means of a network of threads. Although he knots are not unreal, neither are the threads. The network constitutes one great whole. However spatial and material this analogy is, it does show that no such thing as an individual knot exists and that all knots entail one another while retaining their unity. Reality is the nex, and the net is relational.

The analogy also emphasizes another human intuition, Eastern and Western: in a certain sense, all other beings are reflected, included, and represented in all other longs. Because through all lits threads it is in communion with the whole net, every knot in a certain way reflects all other knots. Anaxagoras's èv  $\pi\alpha vrt$   $\pi dvvta$  (all in all), Shivaism's savum-savuārmakam, Neoplatonism's speculation, Aristotle's microsom/macrocoms, Buddhism's pratipusamuphāda, Christianity's (and Anaxagoras's peritbirisis, and the mirror (speculum) nature of a certain philosophy, as well as the law of karma, the theories concerning the mystical body in so many religions, the law of karma, the cheories concerning the mystical body in so many religions, the law of karma the cheolasticism, the Enlightenment's universal reason, as well as modern scientific morphogenetics, magnetic fields, and Gaia theory—all seem to suggest a vision of the world that is less individualistic and in which our metaphorical castle does not have to be defended from so many dragons.  $^{43}$ 

I have already noted that every cosmovision entails a conscious reception of the world or, rather, is the impact that the kosmos, understood as total reality, exercises on our conscious being. A vision of the animistic world would consider the nature of reality as living, as in a certain sense personal. "Being is personal" could constitute the assummary formula. The person then would constitute the original level of Being, not just a traditional epiphenomenon of reality, a kind of accident of Being. Too often ontology discusses Being as if it were an entity without any life or consciousness. An equivalent formula would be, "Being is relational." This second approach understands

phers. Although I cite some in the bibliography, the list is not complete — Berdyaev, Bergson, Blondel, Buber, Bulgakov, Bultmann, Cullmann, Ebner, Gilson, Guardini, Heidegger, Marcel, Maritain, Mouniten, Nédoncelle, Ortegay Gasset, Rahner, Scheler, Schweitzer, Zubiri. I omit some thinkers who are still alive as well as those of earlier times. I do not include Indian thinkers here because the problems they deal with are quite different.

<sup>4)</sup> Among many witnesses, I cite the following: "The Aristorelian nous is a supradiovidual faculty like the Buddha of Indian speculation or the val of Islamic doctrine. This faculty of the Eastern tradictions is super-individual, though essentially personal. . . . The whole framework of the discussion in the West is derived from the incompleteness of Greek metaphysics which limits itself to the individual ego and has never arrived at the profound personal suppositum or hypostasis (diman). The psyche is no substitute for the praeuma, just as the Buddhist imman is no substitute for the Hindu diman" (Macsacranhas [1953], [163).

reality as "person," anthrōpos, as that irreducible dimension of reality under which we experience it. The person is the satpurus ia, the true man—the whole reality, one might say, with reference to the puruṣasūkta of the Rg-veda (X.90, although the expression is not used there).

In contrast to a personalist ontology, this dead ontology of Western individualism may be seen as the originating cause of a certain discrediting of metaphysical speculation. 4<sup>th</sup> Is should be added that the Christian fear of pantheism led the Scholastics to effect a radical separation between ens realissimum (God) and ens commune, clearly an abstraction. 5<sup>th</sup> Discussions on "ontologism" should also be mentioned; they reappear in a different form at a later time: a this level, all problems are interwoven.

Our question concerns knowledge of the "other." Can my ego meer, and therefore know, an other ego? It is obvious that if "person" means that we are the exclusive owners of our own being, Selbstgehörjekeit. "it will be impossible to transcend individual boundaries. We must respect, even tolerate, one another, but nothing more." Intimacy, understood as an unassailable fortress, bears an ultimate status, and privacy becomes a virtually supreme value. This sublimation of individuality has led to the deleterious notion of God conceived of as the Supreme Individual, the Other par excellence, as the One who scrutinizes our innermost self and interferes with our identiva, as an alienating stranser who delumanies us. "

We have seen how the distinction between the alius and the alter throws a certain light on our problem, while leaving the myth of individualism intact. From this perspective we can appreciate the extraordinary "progress" in exegesis and the demythologization and demystification of evangelical and biblical events. Felix culpat

<sup>44</sup> Nédoncelle (1970), 41–47. Although the title of the first half of the book is "Être et personne." Nédoncelle does not develop the problem mentioned here.

<sup>45</sup> This was the fear of Garrigou-Lagrange, the Dominican who dominated Roman Catholic theology for decades, a great expert on mysticism who could not deny that the incarnation seemed to obscure the absolute nature of God. "Lace pur est irreque it irreceptif, irreceptus et irreceptus. S'il était requ dans une puissance, il serait participé et limité, 3'il recevait une perfection nouvelle, il serait une puissance par rapport à elle, en a serait plus Acre pur (Pure act is neither received not receivable. If it were received in a potentialty, it would be participated and limited, if it should receive a new perfection, it would be in potency with respect to it and would no longer be pure Act [1953, 345]). But we have already said that ontological monism leaves no space for the Christian incarnation, despite Aquinas's dittingue. "Pur eact" cannot be incarnated, since then it would no be pure.

<sup>46</sup> Guardini (1963), 99ff., first published in 1927.

Ortega y Gasset, Autopresencialidad, would say, echoing St. Thomas, that "the soul is present to itself" (est sibi praesens; De veritate, q.x., a.8) as the essence of the person (sui ipitus et sui juris, in juridical language).

<sup>4</sup>º To criticize this image of God is one of the principal objectives of Schoonenberg's thought good to the atheism of Sartre, Camus, and others. God "does not dehumanize us but makes us fully human, and finally, through his Word made man... our divinization becomes our humanization" (1971). Romano Guardini had already focused on this problem shalf century earlier.

Yet the problem of the other that remains is, in substance, the problem of the One. Once defined in its incommensurability and imprisoned in its subjective solipissim, the individual can either open her windows to meet the other or remain the prisoner of her isolation. It is the ultimate problem concerning the human mind, at least since the Upanishads: ekam advitiyum (one without a second), and Plato's \(\tilde{\text{PK}}\) w \(\tilde{\text{OA}}\) \(\tilde{\text{NOA}}\) (the one and the many)—that is, the problem of the seesaw between monism and dualism, and the difficulty in understanding that the oscillation is possible because a nondualistic fulcrum lies in between the two extremes.\(\text{PM}\)

What we want to say is that the great contemporary openings on the *alius* that still operate within the myth of individualism are chiefly dualistic theories; even the person is seen by some as a great individual.

If, in the wake of German idealism, we divide reality into the I and the non-I—which simply retranslates the Cartesian dichotomy between res togitams and resextensa—if we begin with the great separation between spirit and matter, we shall end in an atomistic vision not only of matter but of spirit as well. From this kind of separationist thinking Leibniz draws a philosophical consequence, while modern individualism develops its sociological implications. It is clear that the non-I cannot merge into the I without destroying it or itself. The principle of noncontradiction cannot be dethroned by any dictio. Strictly speaking, the alius does not exist. The other does not exist as "other" but as itself. The other exists only for me, for the others. The other is not other for itself. It is our egocentric perspective that calls is an other.

Reality is not formed by I and non-I. It is not reality that is dialectical; it is reason. The thou belongs to reality as well and is neither contradictory nor foreign to the I. The thou is neither I nor non-I. Relation is Advaitic.

The relation I/thou is not dualistic like a relation between two substances, between two "things." The reality I/thou is a relation that constitutes reality itself. There is no I without a you, and vice versa. But neither is the relation monistic; in that case it would not be real. I and you are neither identical nor reducible to I (alone) or you (alone) nor to a higher individual (of a higher unity). To discover myself as a thou is to discover the deepest identity in myself, neither in the face of "an other" nor within a narcissistic mirror. It is rather equivalent to discovering my dynamic ipse, as being myself—tat tvam asi! The tvam belongs inseparably to the tat.

"That thou art"; a thou who responds to the calling of the I that constitutes it as a thou, who in turn "allows" the I to be I. The person is the complex of all the personal pronouns: a relation. We are aware that the word "person" has a long history and translates improperly two fundamental Hellenistic concepts in the elaboration of the Trinitarian doctrinal language as prosopon and hypostasis. We also know that discussion regarding the so-called personality of God defended by Abrahamic

We underscore in between with reference to the Buddhist mādhyamika, the Indian bednäbheda, Buber's Dazwischen (das Zwischenmenschliche), and the in between of the Kyoto school, "The kingdom of God is also in between" (évróg [Lk 17:21]).

monotheisms, as well as the "divine impersonality" attributed to Eastern religions, rests on misunderstandings on the one side and reciprocal "ignorance" on the other. The recent philosophy of personalism also exhibits many nuances. 50

In any event, we will use the word "person" to express the second anthropological conception.

The person is neither an individual nor an undifferentiated existence. Precisely insofar as it is something ultimate, the person escapes every definition. Person is relation because Being is relation. Being is a verb, a communitarian—that is, person-alist—action: esse est coesse—est coesse est actus essendi (to be is to-be-together—and to-be-together is the act of being). A person is a knot that is conscious—that possesses a human consciousness—of being a knot, a consciousness that could be called self-consciousness or a knowing oneself to be an I. Person is that being that says I. But this I is not the subjectivity of the individual I, who crupts with the Reformation, even though it traces itself to Augustine and continues up to Kierkegaard and our own times. Si

Not only is a person capable of communicating, but the person is communication itself. An isolated person, completely individual, is a contradiction in terms. Since the person is neither singular nor plural, six persons cannot be killed so as to save sixty; quantification in this case is not applicable. Every person is an end in himself or herself; their dignity is inviolable. The political consequences that derive from this condition should unsettle the various contemporary systems. "Human rights" are the rights of Man, not of the individual; Man is a person.

Insofar as human knowledge is personal, it engages the whole—the whole of us and the world—even if imperfectly: it must therefore be distinguished from mere calculation. To know is to participate in the known and thus widen the reality of being a person. The constitutive nature of the person, we would like to stress, is to be in relation, and thus capable of knowing. But a person is not only capable of communicating; he is communion itself. I am person insofar as I am communion. Communion is not possession, nor does it mean that other beings (objects or other subjects) belong to me. It is not a question of either the property of objects or domination over subjects. Communion means the belonging (one to the "other") as subjects, not simply as objects of a higher subject. Communion does nor mean that one possesses a you (or a you an I), but that both belong to one another, that one does not exist without the other, and vice versa. Neither is the I prior to the you nor the you to the I. The relationship is not causal because their being is a coesse, a Missein. Ser e start (junto)—Being is a being (together).

 $<sup>^{50}\,</sup>$  See Pavan and Milano (1987) for an illuminating study of the contemporary theologic-philosophical problem.

<sup>31</sup> This leaves open one of the most fundamental intercultural problems. Is the category of Being the most suitable for expressing 'reality'? The discussion is inextricably bound to language, and there are languages that lack the concept of being.

<sup>52</sup> See Milano (1987), 68, who cites Maritain and Molemann

This implies that I cannor know another subject if I treat her as if she were an object. I can, in this case, identify her but cannot discover her identity. "Nobody can say that Jesus is Lord if not in the Holy Spirit" (I Cor 12:3). This assertion would seem rather absurd if "say" meant uttering terms and not really knowing—that is, becomine that which one knows.

It is significant for us to remember that Scholastic philosophy, at least since St. Ambrose, 33 and probably since St. Justin, 34 believed that any truth that anyone asserted originated from the Holy Spirit. Aquinas enjoyed repeating this idea in saying, Omne verum a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est (Everything true, by whomever it is said, is from the Holy Spirit [Sum. theol. Ia-II, q.109, a.1; In Joannem VIII. letc. 6, etc.).

The question of Christ's personal consciousness did not constitute a great problem after the acceptance of the dogmas proclaimed at the Council of Chalcedon: from then on, the person of Christ is the divine person who works through the two natures as its "organs."55 On the other hand, with the birth of psychoanalysis, the direct impact of modernism, and the more indirect influence of the whole Enlightenment mentality, a lively controversy developed toward the beginning of the twentieth century with regard to the so-called "I of Christ."56 This was already the question at the beginning of the twelfth century,57 with the dawn of "Christian humanism": to attribute a human personality to Jesus seemed to deprive Him of His divinity. The problem, as often happens, lies in the failure to deepen the premises. In order to ensure the unity of Jesus Christ, the first Christian councils agreed in declaring that in Christ there was one person alone (the second person of the Trinity) and two natures (the human and the divine)—which naturally requires two wills so as to safeguard human freedom. The moment that Christ's humanity was emphasized, however, and His autonomy acknowledged (otherwise, He could not be considered a man), problems became complicated. If Christ's I is in fact the divine person and at the same time Jesus enjoyed a full human consciousness, how could an omniscient divine consciousness coexist with His human consciousness? The subtleties of such a theology are fascinating and amusing.58 Nevertheless, we shall not enter into them here.

<sup>53</sup> See Ambrose, Glossa Lombardi (PL 191.1651) and Glossa Ordinaria (PL 114.540), as well as Ambrosiaster on 1 Cor 12:3 (PL 17.245 and 258b).

<sup>54</sup> See Mouroux (1952) for additional commentaries.

See John Damascene, De fide orthodoxa III.15 (PG 94.1060), with which Thomas Aquinas agrees. See De veritate q.27, a.4: Humana natura in Christo erat velut quoddam oreanum divinitatis.

See Xiberta (1954); Galtier (1939; 1947; 1954); and Parente (1951; 1952).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Santiago-Ortero (1970).

See as corollary the theological discussion concerning "Christ's faith" (Heb 11:2) or where He also had faith. CF. Kendall and O'Collins (1992). The question concerns whether we have are representing an objective sort or subjective graintive—that is, whether we may say what Jesus Christ might not have had any faith because He experienced the beatific vision or that He did in fact find faith. See also the chapter "Jesus's faith" in Schoonenberg (1971): "Belief is an act cartifuled of the whole person" (146) and its not simply an acknowleddement of abstract truth.

It is interesting to note precisely when the question of Christ's human consciousness became a problem. Within an apersonalistic Scholastic ontology, the question was not troublesome. With the birth of individualism, however, and the philosophies elaborated since Descartes and Kant, the question became philosophically insoluble. If Christ was a human individual, He could not at the same time be a divine one. The only response was sola fide. But the intellectual apartheid of such a fides (which ironically was called sola) could not last long, and the question became a burning one: Who is this Christ? Post-Enlightenment theology displaces the question about Jesus from, "Who do the people say is the Son of man?" (Mt 16:13) to "Who do vou vourself say vou are?"

To sum up: If we are all persons and not individuals, participation in the selfconsciousness of the other is not impossible, although it does have limits. The I understands the other to the extent that the other is a you, and this other becomes ever more a you to the extent to which the I knows and loves it. What we are saying is related to the ancient disciplina arcani, which the initiate alone could understand (as a consequence of participating in the ritual). For the same reason, Christian faith was traditionally required of those who began the study of theology. The study of the Vedas and of Buddhism also had to be preceded by an initiation that would open the way to a certain knowledge, made possible only through love and connartuality.

Those for whom Jesus Christ has become a you can to a certain extent participate in what Christian Scripture calls the Spirit of Christ (Jn 14:26; 16:13) and can possess a certain knowledge of Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor 2:16; 1 Jn 5:20). This knowledge contains dangers of its own that should not be ignored, hallucinations and pathological fantasies of all sorts. We must also keep its limits in mind: the you participates in consciousness in the same way as the l, yet the two remain distinct and cannot be reduced to one. The relation is Advaita, a-dualistic. The history of mysticism is full of examples of false and unhealthy confusions. The I and the thou are not only interedependent but inter-independent, as in the Tinity. We are able to know the thou, although we will never completely penetrate an other consciousness, precisely because each one of us participates in that same consciousness in a unique manner.

This is our problem. I shall now examine a third perspective.

## The Adhyatmic (Pneumatic) Approach

We desire to know Jesus. At the beginning we said that there was only one door for the cheracteristy the innermost recesses of a being: to examine the traces left by His words and deeds. This method is legitimate only on two conditions: that we be conscious of what we are doing and ask permission for a similar incursion. This was the approach of our first type of anthropology, which is dangerously similar to a scientific experiment (experimental psychology).

We also said, in the light of our second perspective, that to force the door is out of the question, because personal consciousness is not an enclosed space but a common agora, where human beings find their communion only by staying together

and interacting. What we therefore need is to share the same ideals and, above all, to love, for it is this that will allow us to establish a certain communion insofar as we already participate in the very personal structure of reality. In a significant sense, this second approach is similar to the kind of observation that psychoanalysis practices.

But there is also a third approach, which consists in sharing nor only ideas and ideals but Being itself. Scripture and Christian tradition insist that not only do we share Christ's very feelings but we are one with Him and transformed in Him. This is the way of experience—the mystical method. Mystical experience, of course, can eliminate neither reason nor the senses. The oculi fidel, mentis et sensus (the eyes of faith, mind, and sense) are interrelated—a skind of integration, I would add, that represents an inescapable task for contemporary philosophy. This threefold approach must be integrated from an intercultural perspective as well. Our study constitutes an endeavor in this direction.

We deliberately use the adjective ādhyātmic, as well as other words taken from a culture that has remained to this very day foreign to the Judeo-Christian tradition, because it is not only cultures bur religions too that suffer when they remain enclosed within themselves. I am not using ādhyātmika in the sense of sānkhya (as a third, interior, type of suffering) but in the pedātuta sense, that is, "in relation to the Self" (ātman), with respect to an integral anthropology in which the real man is considered in all his dimensions, as sat-puruga.

If the first approach is individualistic with respect to the person, the second is so in relation to the whole of reality. Man is neither a separate "individual" nor a "person" isolated from the rest of the universe, including the divine. Neither is humanity a being in itself: the whole of reality is constitutively interconnected.

By introducing the adjective ādhyāmic I wish to give a fresh voice to the tripartite anthropology of early Judeo-Christianity as well as ancient Hellenic Christianity; In this sense I could have entitled the present chapter "the pneumatic approach." In fact, the first Christian centuries saw man in intimate relationship with matter through his body; in constitutive relation with all living beings (especially other people), through the soul; and in a particular bond with the divine world through his spirit.

Î introduce this word "spirit" for a second reason as well: to contribute to a reevaluation of this tripartite anthropology that has been so forgotten within the Christian tradition as to cause the prevalence of the Platonic division between soul and body. Perhaps an Indian perspective could serve as an external stimulus to deepen this "Pauline" anthropology. In a living tradition nothing is definitive.

 $<sup>^{99}</sup>$  See de Lubac (1979), 59–117, for an illuminating study that shows how the Pauline intuition of 1 Th 5:23 has been neglected or minimized by many modern theologians.

<sup>60</sup> See Daniélou (1961) as an example.

<sup>61 &</sup>quot;This anthropology—of the Greek rather than the Latin fathers—has remained very foreign to Western thought" (Congar [1958], 312).

<sup>62</sup> Even though we share the defense of this tripartite anthropology, it seems to be an

Let us attempt to take a short step in the process of deepening our understanding. If we human beings are formed of spirit, soul, and body (πνεθμα, ψυγή, σώμα-pneuma, psychē, sōma-in 1 Th 5:23), we are not just animals, but contain within us a spark, a spirit, something else; and it is this that makes us divinizable in a way that is very different from all other beings. The tradition of Vishnu finds no difficulty in admitting that an animal is God's avatāra because, as we have said. the avatāra possesses an exclusively divine reality. "Those who are ignorant do not recognize my nature when I assume human form," says the Gitā (IX.11). Thousands of pages of Christian Scholasticism debated the question of whether it was possible for God to be incarnated in an animal or even a thing, although, apart from lucubrations concerning the de potentia Dei absoluta, such an incarnation would not bear the meaning that the incarnation has for Christians. While acknowledging divine power to be absolute, St. Thomas clearly states that sola natura humana sit assumptibilis (only human nature is assummable [Sum. theol. III, q.4, a.1) because the creatura irrationalis non habet congruitiatem (an irrational creature does not have "congruency" [with the divine] [ad 3]). However this may be, our interest is concentrated on the different conceptions of Man according to which knowledge of the other is either possible or impossible.

We began by asking ourselves how we can know another individual or person. We implicit presupposition was that knowledge is that innermost act of ours through which we arrive at knowing others. But what if knowledge did not belong to us as a merely private activity—if, on the contrary, it were something in which we only participate? In the latter case, knowing would not mean I am conscious that my ego knows but that I participate in knowing, that knowing is given to me and that I am conscious of it. The first question was concerned with whether "we" can know another individual; the second turned on the problem of acknowledging the you of our person; the third extends to the problem of knowledge as such—neither "objective knowledge" nor that which is merely "formal," but the knowledge that "identifies" and therefore saves.

Commenting on Scripture and expressing a belief common to different traditions, Richard of St. Victor writes that love stands at the origin of consciousness and that, once we become conscious of something, contemplation springs forth, whence knowledge originates.<sup>63</sup>

exaggeration to say that the "definitive formula of biblical and Christian anthropology" is found in this vision of man. See Louis Bouyer, in de Lubac (1979), 70.

a) See Jn 14:21: "He who receives my precepts and follows them loves me; he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love and manifest (ἐμφανίσω) myself το him." This saying seems to make praxis, and therefore love, preeminent. Richard of St. Victor comments, "Ex dilectione inaque manifestatio et ex manifestatione contemplatio et ex contemplation or genitio" (From love springs manifestation, from manifestation contemplation, and from contemplation knowledge [De Trinitate, Prologo, PL 196.888C]). Knowledge certainly is a regulitio ad vitum aeternam" (knowledge for eternal life; according to Jn 17:3). Richards text continues: Yed istait in fide totius boni inchaodi, si in cognition totius boni consummatio

172 CHRISTIANITY

Millennia earlier, this intuition constituted the epitome of many civilizations. Rnow "thy 'self," Greek wisdom said, and the Christian mystical tradition echoed this. "A 'Know your 'Self," the Indic tradition repeats emphatically, meaning the Self that is the true Self and noc "your" own ego (see Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23). Only when it ceases to be your ego will it emerge as the Self that is, indubitably, thy Self. To know God and Christ constitutes eternal life, Scripture says (Jn 17:3), emphasizing that "intelligence (διάνοιτα) has been given to us so that we may know the true [God] "(I Jn 5:20). Our third question, therefore, imples us to shift knowledge of the "other" to knowledge of God. A Spanish saying expresses this idea in poetic form: El camino más corto pasa por las estrellas (The shortest way [between two persons, two hearts] passes through the stars). It is in this sense that I would interpret a cryptic Upanishadic text: "He revealed himself in a threefold way": sa tredhá ātmānam vyakuruta (BUI.2.3). Plato suggests, and Plotinus confirms, that true self-consciousness is one and the same as knowledge of God.

The first question, consequently, does not concern knowledge of the "other" but knowledge of our selves. Ko' ham? "Who (am) 1?" (ditareya-upaniṣad 1.3.11). One day a scientist objected to an Eastern sage who showed a certain skepticism with regard to technological civilization: "But we Westerners have succeeded in sending a man to the moon!"

"That is true," the sage conceded, "but you do not know who you have sent!" In order to know ourselves, we must know who it is in us that knows. To know the who, the Self, the vedanta will say, constitutes realization, salvation.

Here we face a danger that must be immediately avoided: Gnosticism, understood as a spirit/matter dualism and rejection of the body as a prison for the spirit. If knowledge is no more than epistemic, this presumed salvific knowledge excludes the body, and thus the world, and so falls into either a dualism or an idealism that denies any reality outside the "idea." But we have already pointed out that knowledge consists in growth of the whole being and that the third eye sees the other dimension of the real. The French commaitre, to be born together, succeeds in making the sense of "knowing." more immediates.<sup>69</sup>

This means that self-consciousness does not consist in the knowledge of any object: we are subjects, not objects. If we transform Jesus into an object of our knowledge, we may indeed reach a certain objective knowledge about an individual named Jesus, but we shall not succeed in knowing Jesus, who did not know Himself as object. Nor will we share in His self-consciousness. And if a man is characterized by his self-

atque perfectio" (As every good thing originates in faith, so in knowledge we find the fullness and perfection of every good thing [PL 196.889A/B]).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cf. Haas (1971) for a detailed description of this aphorism. \*E caelo descendit, γνώθι
σεαντόν (from heaven descended gnöthi seauton), Juvenal writes (XI.27), as cited by Erasmus
(Adagia I.6.95).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Discussion continues concerning the relation between γιγνώσκω (gignôskô, "know") and γίγνομαι (gignômai, "to generate"), words that do not belong to the same hypothetical root.

The Approach 173

consciousness, we will not have known Him until we share his self-consciousness. "You cannot know the knower of consciousness," says an Indic text (BUIILA.2). "In what way will the knower be able to be known?" the same text asks (ILA.14). "He, the aiman, is not this and is not that... . But in what way will the knower be able to be known?" we are asked a little later (IV.S.15).

The Upanishads assert that if we undertake a search for an object, we shall never ind it because our object will be split progressively into more objects, and specialization will develop endlessly. The Upanishads alert us by asserting that this objective knowledge is not "that by which everything is known." The question then arises: "How can it be known?" (BU 114.14). The answer cannot come from Descartes's Regulae nor from any kind of objective method because, even if it is conceded that we may succeed in knowing the knower, for that very reason we would not know the knower because he would then become the known—known by us. We would have relified the subject and thereby transformed it into an object; but our question was about the subject.

There is, however, a way of knowing the knower, to become the knower. This becoming is true (salvific) knowledge. Jesus, too, tells His disciples to abandon all fear and become what He is: "Be myself, feed on me, remain in me."

Tat trann asi is the ultimate Upanishadic intuition: "This thou art." Discover yourself as a thou, as the one who feels and understands the ahambrahmämi: "I am brahman." This can be said truly only after we have realized that āman (is) brahman, so that it is brahman which says that it is (am) brahman, and not my ego. The three personal pronouns come into play here; all are necessary for a complete realization (of the self).<sup>66</sup>

Knowledge of the other is not presented here as knowledge of "an other." It is simply knowledge, the knowledge that arises when one becomes what one knows, that which one must know: "That is the âtman in you that is found in every thing," concludes a text already cited (BU III.4.2). It is no longer a question of invading intimacy or objectifying the hypothetical "other." The "other" has become your Self. Has it not been written: "Love your neighbor as your self" (thyself) is what I was referring to when I criticized a certain kind of epistemology that is detached from anthropology (and ontology) and spoke of knowing as a growth in being—of our being.

I am saying what, in one form or other, virtually all mystical schools have underscored. Full knowledge is synonymous with a participation that allows us to achieve identity with the known, something that constitutes more than a simple epistemic activity. To achieve knowledge of Jesus is not to obtain information about Mary's son, not even about the meaning of the expression "son of God" (in this respected). The activity is a mystical act, an act

See Panikkar (1977), 696ff.

<sup>67</sup> See the Archimandrite Sophrony (1978), ch. 2: "One prays for the whole world as if it were one's self."

that constitutes the human spirit's highest understanding precisely because it means knowing the icon of the whole of reality (Col 1:15–20).

In brief, if we share a human nature, and this nature exhibits an intellectual aspect, then consciousness of self is not only knowledge of our respective egos but also a participation in knowledge (knowledge of Self—as subjective genitive, that is, of the knowing Self). A strictly monotheistic world vision will maintain that this consciousness of self is the privilege of a supreme Being and will allow us only an asymptotic and analogical cognitive process. In a Tinitarian vision, however, there is room for both identity and difference. The other can be known to the extent to which it shares the same reality with us, but we shall never lose our unicity, our identity, because in the Trinitarian vision, reality is irreducible to an indistinctive unity. In this experience, obviously, the other is not an aliud, but the thee in a polar relation to the I. Nobody knows the Son if not the Father; nobody knows the Father if not the Son, and othose to whom the Son choose to reveal him (Mr 11:27).

We know Him thanks to the illumination that, in the last analysis, "descends from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17), James's spiritual insight was taken up by a spiritual tradition that began with St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure and continues, though with notable variations, until the ontologism of the last century.

We have characterized Man as a self-conscious being, although a rotal selfconsciousness is impossible—as Socrates had already noted (Plato, *Phaedrus* 229e). The autos would cease to be autos. And so it is that, once again, we need the Trinity. Brahman is brahman, a certain Vedantic system says, but does not know that it is brahman. It is I Swara, the same as brahman, that knows it is brahman, that recognizes itself as humban.

In other words, "I cannot be absolutely identical with my self." I cannot find my absolute identity, not only because I live in the temporal, which is a constant otherness (the "I am" who says so or thinks it is already an "I was" remembered, or an "I shall be" projected), but also because no predicate exists that is capable of saying who the subject is without having transformed it into a predicate. Reason tells us that I cannot know totally who that I is who says "I am," or asks himself, "Who am I?" I cannot think by means of an "absolute reflection," although perhaps I can be it without knowing or thinking it. What meaning does it have, however, if I can neither say nor think it? We cannot say that "it cannot be it," although we can surely assert that I would not be "I" would not be an "I am" but an "am" that does not belong to me. Yahweh is the only one who can say "I am"—that is, pronounce His own name.

Hence there is no absolute consciousness of self. The I known is not the I knowing. The I knows itself in recognizing the you "equal" to the I. The complete noeisis noeises (Aristotle, Met. XII.9.1074b.33ft.) leads to absolute idealism or solipsism. If the I knew itself totally, the I would be pure knowledge without any space for a you. And if this Being were real, its knowledge would then be identical with reality. If God were this absolute I without a you who knows itself in total identity, Being would be completely intelligible and reality pure intelligibility. The unintelligible would not be real. That, however, is pure idealism.

The egotistic consciousness of the I, on the other hand, is a consciousness of the you. These yous manifest an ontological gradation that ranges from a pure consciousness of the Trinitarian thou to our empirical consciousness of material things.

But there is more. The "strict" consciousness of the you (subjective genitive) is, from the perspective of the you, exhaustive. From the perspective of the I, on the other hand, the you is simply the consciousness of the I (objective genitive) that the I has of its self as object (of its self-consciousness). But this you leaves an "empty space" for the I which "is" not consciousness alone (precisely because there is no absolute egotistic consciousness—the I's total self-identity). The I has consciousness of its self as a you which, though it is nor the I, identifies itself with the I. This "empty space" is the Spirit. Certainly the Logar is "equal" to the Father, the Logar is but the Logar of the Father, and the Father is "equal" to the Son He has generated. But precisely because there is no absolute egotistic consciousness but only consciousness of the thou, the I (whom we call Father) leaves "space" to the Spirit as hiatus, as a space between the Father and the Son. The Spirit represents the Advaita, the nondualism between the Father and the Son. Shence, they are neither two nor one.

If only the Father and Son existed in absolute equality, the duality would collapse into monism—and there would be no "space" for us. The Spirit obstructs, so to speak, the "short circuit." The Spirit is the dynamism of Life—in which we exist.<sup>88</sup>

Even from a less metaphysical point of view, we may ask ourselves: Where is our true !? Within or without, in contemplation or in activity? Is it, the way of entasis or ecstasy? In brief, the addlytimite approach does not ask, What is Man?—as the first approach does. Nor does it ask, Who is Man?—as personalist anthropology does. Rather, it asks, Who am I? The first method allows us to ask, What is Jesus? The second asks Him, Who are you? The third wishes to penetrate into the Who am I? and finds itself bounced back into the Trinitarian perichôrèsis.

Let us not lose the thread of our argument. It should be clear by now that our enterprise is not a problem to be solved but a life to be lived.

To sum up, we desire to know the self experience of the man Jesus—that is, to speak of the mysticism of Jesus Christ. If He is simply a historical individual who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, we must follow the current exegetical method, which will be very useful in tracing the context in which He lived and will constitute a needed corrective to prevent us from projecting our hypotheses onto a nonexisting background. We must, however, respect the appropriate geographical and historical distance: Jesus remains a fascinating and unsettling unknown—a He. We may or may not discover that "He is the Way"—a doctrine.

If in our consciousness we discover ourselves to be persons—that is, the polarity I-you—the reality of the you will reveal itself (the you itself) ever more and more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> See a text of Meister Eckhart on which we will not comment: "In spiritu sancto sunt omnia, ut deus non sit in nobis nee nos sumus in deo nisi in spiritu sancto" (All things are in the Holy Spirit so that God is neither in us nor we in God, but rather, in the Holy Spirit [Sermo IV. Lateinische Werke IV. 251).

to the extent to which our intimacy becomes illuminated by a loving intellect: Jesus, living and mysterious companion—the thou. We may or may not discover that "Thou art Truth"—a personal encounter.

If in the process directed at knowing our selves we should discover the innermost Self in which our ego has been transformed—that is, if we should become or realize this Self—we would discover in it precisely that figure toward which our inquiry aims: Christ, symbol of that Self with whom—perhaps without that Jesus—we would not have dared identify ourselves, the I. We may or may not discover that "Thou art Life"—a mystical experience.

The three negations—"or may not"—constitute neither an anticlimax nor the expression of a personal fear. They fulfill a threefold function. First, these considerations do not offer an apodictic conclusion. They are not syllogisms: there remains room for freedom. Second, this reading is not the only possible one: there is room for other interpretations. Third, despite all our good will, this study may have gone astray. There is an opening for corrections.

This long meditation tells us that not only are the three methods legitimate but that they are also relative to their respective visions of the world. Once we become conscious of this pluralism, we can attempt to show how the three methods complement one another.

### Existential Inquiry

#### The Status Quaestionis

In a discussion such as ours the inquirer is involved not just marginally but in depth. The problem seizes us completely. This vital interest, however, does not imply that we must defend any particular "parry line." Our inquiry is directed at nothing other than what we experience as true: "It is by experience that men arrive at science and art." "O' The expressions of our experience are not infallible, however, and must therefore remain open to criticism and dialogue.

Our involvement is total inasmuch as we are raising in a critical way the question of the ultimate meaning of life, "a question that is the homeo-morphic equivalent to the problem concerning the identity of Jesus Christ. We ask who Jesus Christ is and expect an answer that will reveal to us much more than the pure biographical data concerning a given individual. Who Akbar or Montezuma might be is surely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> See Aristotle, Met. I.1.981a: ἀποβαίνει δ' ἐπιστήμη καὶ τέχνη διὰ τῆς ἐμπειρίας τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (Hominibus autem scientia et ars per experientiam evenit).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> As Bellet (1990) says, "Christ seems to escape every attempt at neutrality and hence objectivity.... He is, in a certain way, the never-ending rotal of all he interpretations or perceptions of Christ that mankind is capable of crafting" (23). The entire book should be read as a "Fifth gospel that rests on texts but with a support that does not act as a support because the word is always granted its necessary freedom" (60).

an important question, but we do not relate them directly to the ultimate purpose of life, as we do with the drive that sustains the question concerning Jesus Christ. Although the answer may be disillusioning or different from what we had expected, the question is charged with that expectation, one that entails no preconception, however, because the question is critical and we must be prepared for any answer. If one asks why an inquiry about Akbar or Montezuma could not have produced the same impact as an inquiry about jesus, the answer is that it could have done so, but in fact has not. Christian imperialism? Possibly, and in fact this has frequently been the case. The question is legitimate and also realistic. We must, however, call attention to three cautions.

First, to raise questions about any person whatsoever ultimately becomes an inquiry into the mystery of Man and reality. In this respect, an inquiry about Jesus is but one example of the inquiry into the mystery of a person. In fact, from Homer to Einstein, from Caesar to Mao, there have been many icons of this kind: Jesus is only one of these—central for some, irrelevant for others.

Second, it is a fact that the historical relevance in time, space, and events (with respect to good and evil) of Jesus Christ's impact on human life is, if not unique, surely quite exceptional. Besides, in the overall climate of Western culture, Christian or not, history bears its own importance. The essential role of history is probably a pre-Christian idea that owes much to the Semitic mentality, but Christian, as qualified heirs of the Abrahamic tradition, have elaborated a complete Heilsgeschichte that maintains that history culminates in a "history of salvation." In any event, due in great part to how this Jesus Christ has been interpreted, history has become the principle for judging reality and includes the Western method of calculating time. In this sense, the question concerning Jesus Christ differs from the one about ASOA—to cite another famous name. It is necessary to remember, however, that the importance of the historical Christ, dependent as it is on the central role of history, is not the same as the importance of Christ for the peoples of the world who do not live in the myth of history.

Third, if the question about Jesus originates from a legitimate curiosity about this person, it does not differ from the one about Asoka, although the question about Christ carries much greater weight insofar as the claim that Christ is the Savior does not permit neutrality: indifference itself already constitutes a position (Mt 12:30).

It should be clear that the question about Jesus is important for our life. Although we cannot abandon our prejudices completely, we should be conscious of them and ready to eliminate them should they become an obstacle to the discovery of truth. It is undeniable, however, that the interest of many readers in the mystical experience of the man of Galliet is due not to a simple curiosity about a certain individual (unique as each person is) but to the fact that this man involves us (and many others) in a special way. We suppose or believe that His experience is of capital—not to say unique—importance for most of humanity. It is not a question of mere curiosity.

I have already said that personal involvement does not imply a commitment to defend a priori any particular opinion or attitude. We may remain disappointed or

178 CHRISTIANITY

abandon Jesus, either because He does not offer us any "words of eternal life" on because the very expression "eternal life" has lost all meaning, or even seems to us to be an outright lie. Nevertheless, the question concerning Jesus Christ's identity claims to be an ultimate question. We ask ourselves who such a being might be because He has exercised a considerable impact on the history of human life on earth and still holds a central meaning for many. We should therefore examine critically whether these expectations are justified; to ignore them would not do justice to the question itself, which, for some, is charged with twenty centuries of history. The context of such a long history is important—although for the Jews it is a question of four millennia (Abraham), and for still others it embraces the entire context of human history since the beginning of the universe (sāntanta dharma, and so forth). The questions about Jesus are certainly no small matter—nor are those about the Buddha, Durgá, Viracocha, or Krishna. To the question of Jesus as to who men say He is corresponds our question as to what Jesus says Man is.

This consciousness makes it impossible to neglect any methodological reference to the person who poses the question. We can neither deny nor repress our convictions, which implies that our approach can be a synthesis of three methods insofar as we grant each of them a certain validity. Our study does not renounce form criticism, historical criticism, the knowledge of canonical and apocryphal texts, orthodox and heterodoxical interpretations, nor does it adopt the "epistemology of the hunter"—that is, of those inquirers who imagine that they are immune from any presuppositions and shoot at whatever moves. Neither does our study proceed in a pictistic way nor start from a sentimental vision of Jesus—nor from a unilateral evaluation of history. Christian history is not free of contradictions.

The question about Jesus is neither pure speculation nor an abstract theologoumenon. If a Christian is a person who has been baptized and received the Eucharist, this should signify that she has met Christ personally, even though this experience has usually not reached its fullness (Mt 13:3ff.). The authentic Christian is not so much the follower of an ideology or a person who believes in the beliefs of others as one who has experienced the reality of Christ. Without this personal encounter, everything remains nothing more than superstructure. Let us not forget that the grace of Christ is Christ Himself and that the opus operatum (i.e., [as a result of the opus operatum (i.e., [as a result of the opus operatum is Christi (i.e., [as a result] "Of Cartholic theology is not magic but opus operants Christi (i.e., [as a result] "Of Christ performing the work").

This meeting is and remains pure imagination or a mere convergence of ideas or ideals unless it is above all a meeting of persons, a meeting in the innermost centre of our existence, a meeting that embraces our whole being. Many mystics define it as a falling in love, others as an actual touching. All this would remain an illusion, however, unless this meeting could actually take place; otherwise, Christ remains on more than a figure of the past or a construction of our imagination or, in the

<sup>71</sup> See Frei (1975) for an analysis of this presence of Christ in a postmodernist and postdeconstructionist analysis of how a person becomes "present" in the consciousness of another.

The Approach 179

best of cases, the memory of someone who no longer is. The meeting is not with the "Messiah" or any other attribute but with the "thou" of this ineffable mystery that Christians call Christ.

In short, this meeting is possible if the communication and communion unfold within the innermost center of our being: the person. Perhaps the very idea we have of "person" is such because we ourselves have experienced this personal encounter. In any case, this meeting is personal because the person does in fact constitute this kind of relation. An isolated individual (if such existed) would not be a person. The person is our innermost, most mysterious reality, incommunicable because she is already communion. The individual is the unknown who is encountered on the street; the person is someone who is received in our heart.

It is crucial to make my thought as precise as possible, in order to avoid a pietistic or sentimental interpretation, as well as a cerebral or rational one. It is not a question of meeting someone in the way we encounter a friend; this would be a product of pure imagination, since Jesus lived twenty centuries ago. Not is it a question of meeting my own inwardness or my ego, although this might in fact entail a concrete discovery. Perhaps the word "encounter" does not express the idea adequately. Once again, it is not a question of dualism. Christ is not only the friend or the spouse, though human language is virtually compelled to draw on such metaphors. Christ is not an other. Nor is it a question of monism—I am not Christ. We are neither one not two. This is the nondual relation of the person, the experience of Advaita that we tried to describe earlier.

At this point I must apply the theory of pistenma to myself. It is not possible to speak of this matter in the third person. I cannot, for example, explain the meaning of Durgā unless I myself reach the pistenma of the believer (in Durgā), which may differ from the noëma of the nonbeliever. Likewise, I will not be able to furnish an adequate description of Jesus Christ if I pur my faith in this symbol into parentheses (epochē). In confessing my belief I will avoid every possible absolutization—as those who believe in reason are often inclined to do when they speak of "pure" reason. I shall constantly remember that this is my belief but I cannot set it aside. The methodological doubt about truth and certitude already implies an ontological fracture that provokes the doubt. The methodological doubt appears along with the pretension that something exists that is absolutely indubitable, while in fact we cannot pretend not to believe that which we do believe, and vice versa. The critical imperative is the relativization of the pistenma.

## Personal Experience

Having said all this, we must now take the final step. It is no longer a question of an intellectual exercise nor of an act of will but of an empirical and existential plunge into the abyss of reality, into what Paul defines as the depths, the abyss of divinity (Rom 8:39; Ep 3:18; 1 Cor 2:9–10). It is a question of the Christian mystical experience.

Christ's experience was His personal experience. I can receive it only in my own personal experience, the experience of my own identity. As I seek to express it, I will perhaps undergo the influence of what I have learned and use a Christian vocabulary or that of Jesus Christ Himself—and for this reason I will give the impression of reporting His experience rather than my own.

On the one hand, meditation on His words and actions may give form to my experience or provide a framework in which to express it; on the other hand, the personal experience of my own identity may have found for itself in the example of Jesus Christ an image and perhaps even a model.

One could say, echoing what Newton once wrote, Hypotheses non fingo (I do not fashion hypotheses). To this, inspired by Gadamer, one could add, neither will I fashion Exfabrungswerschmelzungen (fusion of experiences). Having recognized this inextricable relation and setting aside for the moment the question of whether I would be capable of expressing my personal experience even in a different language, or whether other traditions have given form to it, I shall try to describe it as a hermeneutical suggestion for understanding the experience of Christ.

As I awaken to reality, or simply to consciousness, I find in myself a desire to know all things, though I discover them as veils. Those veils reveal to me their apparent form while at the same time they conceal what they are. Since I do not find their "essence," I turn to my inner self. I begin the conscious pilgrimage to the center of my being but even here I do not find any foundation or any refuge, neither in myself nor in anything present to my consciousness. I cannot identify myself with my body or my mind or with what I am today, was yesterday, or will be tomorrow. I experience myself as alive, below or beyond or simply different from anything of which I might be conscious. My foundation seems simply to be an abyss, an Abgrund (or, even, Ungrund). I neither find nor discover myself. But is it precisely this "myself" that asks, Who (am) I? Ko'ham?

Reason tells me that, since I do not come from my self, I must come from some other source. To conclude that I am a "creature" may be logical and legitimate, but it does not constitute an experience. My experience is simpler; I find it in myself. What I experience is contingency and this experience is in either that of the "sinner" launched into the world nor that of the "just" called by heaven. The experience of contingency is tangential (as the word suggests), neither immanent nor transcendent. That which touches me tangentially (nangere), that makes me touch (cum-tangere) is neither transcendence (untouchable) nor immanence—which cannot be touched either. We can experience neither transcendence, "No one has seen God" (In 118), nor immanence. There is no space to have such experience.

<sup>72</sup> As we have noted above, Gadamer (1972), 289 and passim, speaks of the act of understanding as a "fusion of horizons."

In the experience of contingency I discover the tangential touch between immanence and transcendence. Touch requires that somebody touch something, but in the touch itself we find neither duality nor unity; we find instead a nondual union—Advaita. In the experience of contingency I do not experience myself as "creation" (of somebody else) because I touch the infinite, nor do I experience myself as the "creator" (of myself) because this touch is actualized in a point that has no dimensions. I realize that I participate, that I am an integral part of that very flux we call reality, although the word "barticipate" does not express the experience adequately.

What I ruly am cannot be something that I am not. I am neither matter nor spirit, neither devil nor angel, neither earth nor heaven, neither World nor God. I am the point of the tangent in which those two poles meet: I stand in between. Everything that I have, I have received—from parents, ancestors, culture, earth, from an evolutionary past, karma, God, or anything else whatsoever. What I have may be called creature but what I am is certainly not identical with what I have. I he met I have, and with it I have everything else. The I I do not have, (that) I am. What I am is neither creature nor creator. I do not know what I am. I know that, although limited, I have already in some way transcended the limits: consciousness that I am finite shows me the infinite. I am neither finite because I know I am such, nor infinite because I am conscious that I am finite.

I must admit that perhaps I would not have thought of asking myself, "Who am I?" unless others had urged me to do so—and thereby incited me to search for an answer.

Ever since I was young I heard it said that it was God who created "me," but since then, though I was in no position to explain this until later, I had the experience that this "me" was not really I. Yes, I do have a "me" but I am not identical with that me. "My" I seems to be found beyond that "me." But about this "I," which in a certain sense is inseparable from my "me," I can say nothing—except, perhaps, that though it does "remain" me, it is not me, as one Eastern text among others seems to confirm:

All beings subsist in me, but I do not subsist in them, nor even do beings subsist in me. BG IX.4–5<sup>73</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Zachner translates this, "And (yet) contingent beings do not subsist in me." S. Piano renders it, "Nor are beings in me." Here is the meaning of contingency: to subsist and not subsist; to be and not to be; a touch that does not touch, detached (åsaktam; BG XIII.14).

I felt responsible for everything that ene "me" did but not completely responsible for everything that it was (or is). Everything has been given to "me"—my ideas, my ability to achieve intelligibility, along with time, space, birth, inclinations, and so on. No scientific answer is exhaustive. Everything may be the fruit of the global evolution of the human species that has arrived at me, but nothing achieves or discovers the I. The I is not "me" even if the "me" uses, abuses, and at times usurps the I. I have long meditated on a passage in the Rg-veda I.164.37:

What I am I do not know.
I roam around alone, under the weight of the mind.
When the Firstborn of Truth reaches me
it has been granted me to participate in that same Word.

We are confronted with a paradox. The more my "me" acts, so much less is the I active; and the more the I is active, so much less does the "me" intervene. The explanation seems obvious: I cannot say or know who I am inasmuch as the variety of predicates possible cannot be identified as such with the subject. My consciousness of self cannot be completely objectified. The I is prior and higher than knowing who or what I am. In brief:

I have succeeded in experiencing the "me" as the you of the I. The I moves me as a you, the you is the agona, the kşetna, the field of the I. My task was to listen more than to speak. I was also able to notice that my so-called prayer was a letting myself be guided more than a request for help, an answer or response to a solicitation to which I was subject more than a request addressed to another. To call God a thou, it seemed to me, with all due respect, was not very convincing—and also egocentric. God is the I, if anything, and "I" the you. Yet, in moments of difficulty, suffering, and testing in my life, I was led spontaneously to invoke thee, Father, Divinity—and even more frequently, Christ, my Iştadevatā."

Later the roles seem to have been inverted—the interior intimo meo of Augustine, Ibn Arabī, Thomas, Eckhart, Calvin, the Upanishads and many others began to become real. 75 My small I was neither relevant nor ultimate.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I Istadeuată is not the deity we have chosen or arbitrarily preferred; it is rather the icon of the deity that allows everyone an intimate and personal relation while knowing that it is only an icon. The istadeuată is that form of the divine that corresponds most closely to our culture, idiosyncrasy, and personal circumstances; it is the concrete name we find to express our experience of this ultimate Mystery that many call God. In Egyptian religion the notion of netjar existed in the same sense—that is, the God (a God, the Supreme God, "my" God) with whom I fed directly related. The istadeuată is neither objective nor subjective; it is relational. The "my God" of a sincere prayer is truly "my God."

<sup>75 &</sup>quot;Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo" (And you were more deeply

We find an echo in Paul's scriptural sentence: "It is nor my 'me' that counts: I do not consider my life precious for me" (Ac 20:24). The I was becoming clusive while a more real self-appeared that was neither my ego nor a divine I. My true self could be neither a simple rational animal nor a divine being. A mesite's (mediator [1 Tim 25]) was emerging within, a mediator (nor an intermediator) between the infinite (whose traditional name is God, transcendence, the absolute I) and my ego, my 'me'. Naturally, what came to my mind were all the texts that describe Christ's dwelling in the deepest center of our being, as well as similar affirmations that a great many spiritual master so forker traditions have made.

I could also personally relive the four adverbs of the Council of Chalcedon, <sup>76</sup> the theanthropy of Bulgakov and the *theōsis* of many church fathers. Is this nepthaps the experience of divine immanence? It could also be called the *Advaita* experience. The mediator mentioned is the *anthrōpos* Jesus Christ—as the second Adam in which human nature as a whole is represented (1 Cor 15:22 and *Denz.* 624). Perhaps I was discovering myself simply as Man.

I experienced the "inner energy," the "grace," the "power" that was my most innermost self, and which made me do things that are otherwise inexplicable (though psychology can always intervene by offering two-dimensional explanations). I was discovering Christ.

But I speak of "memory" and already concede too much to "interpretation."

"Thinking to myself I no longer say I, nor do I say you when I think of another," wrote Yunus Emré, a Turkish dervish of the fourteenth century.<sup>77</sup> "My I is God, I do not know others outside of my very God," St. Catherine of Genoa wrote (*Vita*, XIV).<sup>78</sup>

If a simple man like me (and many others) is able to live such experiences, it becomes easier to believe that the "man Jesus Christ" could have lived them, in a much higher manner. One recalls Thomas Aquinas's dictum, Omnis cognitio est per aliquam similitudinem (All knowledge occurs through a certain likeness [Sum. theol. I, q.14, a.11, ad 3). Aristotle and Kant affirm the same idea.

To sum up: Where there is a more or less objective rational "arena" in which various forms of rationality may be found, a meeting place also exists between the different experiences, which can only be the agons of the same experience. If I am to enter into contact with the experience of Jesus, the meeting must take place within the sphere of a common experience—minutis minuendis.

in me than my innermost part, and higher than my highest part), writes Augustine in the Confessions III.6.11. See Panikkar (1966), 248ff., for other texts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> The human relation with the divine, even without hypostatic union, is qualified by four adverbs: *inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter*.

<sup>77</sup> Vannucci (1978), 149.

<sup>78</sup> Panikkar (1966), 249,

### The Search for Credibility

What we have said had to be clarified from the very beginning because it justifies and relativizes our selection of exers. We could defend this by asserting that Christian tradition has retained such texts as central. But again, this understanding of tradition depends on a choice, even if it follows that of the idea of the ecclesia magna, which has become a standard historical narrative. We are sufficiently aware of obscure historical aspects and of the machinations of this church, such that they weaken this standard narrative. The texts that we shall cite are not, of course, the only ones that could be selected, but they do allow us to furnish a certain picture of the mystical experience "the man Jesus Christ" might have had.

My comments may still be valid even if the historical Jesus did not pronounce the words cited literally, or were not the second person of the Trinity. In any case, I maintain that He is a prototype of the human condition. It should be clear, at this point, that if I speak of an experience and meeting with Christ, it is not a question of evoking or imagining the past but rather of a meeting with someone alive.

In saying this, we do not intend to ignore the achievements of exegetical analysis or the context of traditional orthodoxies. Nor do we seek to place Jesus Christ in an African context (Christ the proto-ancestor, the healer, the chief)\* or in an Asian context, saying, for example, that He is the sadguru, or the Jiuanmukta, the supreme satyāgraha, Adustin, or yogi, the Prajāpati incarnace—mande), the highest avatāra, ādi-purusa, divine śakti, the tempieternal Aum, or some other. Neither do we confront Christ with the key figures of other religions. Although all the problems are important, we are now engaged in a much humbler, though even tiskier, effort—a personal exercise in what the ancients defined as fides quaerems intellectum, because I am convinced that faith is man's life (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) and that faith is the way to liberation (Upadeśasā-hasrī 1.1). Si "Unless you believe, you will not live"—or "not understand," as another interpretation of an ancient Heberow exex says (1s 7:9).

<sup>79</sup> Sec C. H. Dodd's (1970) excellent chapter on Jesus's "Personal Traits", where he describes rather effectively just a few of Jesus's observations on things and persons but not the utterances about himself. See Kahlefeld (1981): "Christentum ist eine Beziehung auf die konbette Gestale Jesu Christ" (Christianity is a relation with the concrete figure of Jesus Christ). See also Felder (1953) and Gerham (1947), which, though a little dated, still have value. Both have a chapter on "The Personality of Jesus," while Felder has a paragraph on "The Interior Life of Jesus."

<sup>80</sup> See Evers (1993), 175ff.

<sup>81</sup> See Sugirtharajah (1993).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> As examples, see Robinson (1979); Fries (1981); Venkatesananda (1983); Koyama (1984); Knitter (1985); Thomas (1987); Vempeny (1988); Dupuis (1989); Keenan (1989); Schreiter (1991); Moran (1992); and Lefebure (1993).

 $<sup>^{83}</sup>$  See the important affirmations about \$\$raddha\$ ("faith") in \$BG\$ III.31; VI.37, 47; VII.21–22; IX.23; XVI.1–17, etc.

We quickly discover that we are not alone in this enterprise.<sup>81</sup> In fact, the greater part of genuinely mystical interpretations of Christ point to the same direction. There is also a significant similarity between the affirmations of many other philosophers and sages of different traditions—without claiming that they all say "the same thing" (as if such a thing existed as a Kantian "thing in itself").

It is worth singling out the fact that, although Christianity asserts that it bases itself on the person of Jesus—with the exception of some interpretations during the first few centuries—a great part of Christian self-understanding rests on the historical narratives of Jesus's words and works rather than on one's own personal consciousness. We should remember once again that, according to the vitrually unanimous redigions, faith or initiation is required for the authentic study of the "sacred doctrines." "Teacher of the initiation" is an accepted title for both African and Oceanic Christology.\* In the modern Western Christian tradition, a strong wind of objectivity has swept away the mystical consciousness, pushing it to the margins of Christian life. Christic faith, which began as "religiosity of the Word," has continued to evolve, sociologically speaking, into a "religion of the Book." The colloquium salutis that a certain theology aims at, between the divine Word and the human word, is above all a colloquium between two "words," not just the reading of a text.

Whoever that young rabbi might have been or whatever consciousness of self He might have had, the important and decisive thing was thought to be faith in what had been written about Him, not only in the first documents (canonical) but likewise in subsequent writings (conciliar—and even, for some, papal). Despite several different ideas, we undoubtedly find a certain consensus in acknowledging what He has said and done. For a certain period of time it seemed that all problems were resolved by admitting that He was the son of God or, in any case, an extraordinary prophet, an instrument of divinity who played both a cosmic and a historic role. In other words, it seemed that what really counted was His function, His doctrine, His example. "Christian faith" became virtually synonymous with the acknowledgment of a complex of facts and doctrines. The living figure of Jesus Christ was protected by a heavy doctrinal mantle, just like the traditional madonnas of southern Europe, virtually buried under heavy clothes, jewels, and flowers. I am not challenging either the legitimacy or truth content of these systems of belief. I am only undertaking a different pilgrimage, or simply seeking to become travel companions on the human path, this time with a lighter knapsack.

Today one hears talk of a Christology "from above" in opposition to a Christology "from below." <sup>36</sup> Here we must be careful. Although labels have practical value, they always impose limitations on reality, which, like the rainbow, shows no

<sup>84</sup> See Amaladoss (1981). Other non-Western Christologies have emerged in recent years, some of which are included in the bibliography.

See Evers (1993), 179, and May (1990), both of which have large bibliographies.
 See Bordoni (1991), 247–49, who also speaks of an implicit Christology and an explicit one.

boundaries between colors. If someone were to classify this study, she might define it as a Christology 'from within." After all, we do know that the 'kingdom of the heavens' is (kivot) neither 'between' nor 'wichin." but in the same intimate relation with the whole of creation—because reality as a whole is "triune." That is why we must always subject our experiences to the dialogue and criticism of the "we," the 'vou" of the community.

There was no reason to be very curious about Jesus the man since He was considered to be fundamentally a divine being—an understandable attitude as long as the Christian emphasis was placed on theocentrism. Within this framework, Jesus continued to be simply an instrument of God, who resurrected Him from death, inspired whar He had to say and do, and was by His side when He performed miracles. After all, Jesus had asserted that He had come to do the Father's will, and to say only what the Father wanted Him to say. In listening to Him, therefore, the Christian is obeying God's will. What more could we want? Is it perhaps only morbid curiosity to go beyond what He simply said and did and examine what the mal lesus felt and experienced?

Some might feel it necessary to psychoanalyze Jesus of Nazareth. They are surely free to do so. But although such a project is legitimate, we should, in that case, speak not of His mystical consciousness but of His psychological disposition. This is always an appropriate caution because the interest in psychology, the weakening of a certain image of God, and the growing fascination regarding the figure of Christ outside ecclesiastical circles seem to justify this desire to learn more about the man Jesus and what inspired Him to say and do what He said and did.<sup>18</sup> Who did He think He was?

But we might also leave Jesus tranquil on the analyst's couch and simply walk by His side and ask Him where He lives (In 1:38), and from where He speaks. I am following this second approach as a way that differs from both experimental psychology and deductive theology. It is obvious, however, that in this respect He was rather clusive. If biographies of Jesus continue to be produced today, is it because of curiosity, literary fashion, or because His figure still inspires, in good and evil? Jesus remains a personality who does not leave us at peace. If the produced to the produc

The Western Christian and post-Christian tradition could be interested in such approaches, as many modern novels on Jesus prove; nor should we neglect

<sup>87</sup> A reference to Drewermann seems obligatory at this point (1984–85; 1987–88). The importance of the theological controversy regarding his ideas should not be minimized. See Benedikt and Sobel (1992).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> "I truly believe that now we can know almost nothing about Jesus's life or personality" (Bultmann [1958a], 8). "This statement is often badly misinterpreted. It should not be taken as an assertion that Bultmann denies any knowledge about the historical Jesus. What we cannot know is the most intimate life, the heroic struggle that so fascinated the early interpreters' (Bairf 19771, 39).

I have already mentioned the interest in Christ in a wider context. See Stöckli (1991) for a Steinerian approach, Schiwy (1990) for a serious presentation in a New Age direction, and Massa (1995) for a brief contribution to a mystical understanding of Christ.

The Approach 187

the importance of the "feminist Christologies" that are emerging today. They offer a sorely needed corrective to patriarchal (or "kyrio-centric") interpretations and constitute an essential complement to Christological studies. I, however, am seeking to approach the figure of Christ neither out of psychological curiosity nor for apologatical purposes, but from an Indie perspective. Almost unconsciously, it asks: What kind of person "intoxicated with the divine," or what kind of religious hero, was this historical figure who has given life to one of the most important movements of the last two millennia?"

We know more or less what Jesus did. We have also heard what He might have said, what has sprung out of all this stands before our eyes. Is it not legitimate, therefore, simply to ask ourselves once again who Jesus might be? We know what Christians have said? But He Himself, who did He think He was? How did He experience His human consciousness? He asked: Who do people say is the "Son of man?" Here we turn the question around and address Him: "You, what do you say of yourself? Who do you think you are?" Or should we content ourselves with the clusive answer given to John the Baptist (Mt 11:2-6)? Is it perhaps blasphemous to dare penetrate into the personal intimacy of this Christ.

Before continuing to consider Jesus the Christ's possible intuitions, let me try to exemplify my logical journey and analyze another phrase that a man like us might have pronounced: "I am an elephant that flies in the skies."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Geiselmann's thirty-two-page article (1962) ends as follows: "We should not delude ourselves: what we have in front of us is only the specifically Western interpretation of Jesus Christ. Tomorrow, perhaps, when the Eastern Asian sensibility and mind will artempt to investigate the mystery of Christ, other aspects of Christ will be disclosed, depths until now inaccessible to the West" (p. 770). This text may be complemented by a phrase of Keshub Chandra Sen, so often repeated in India in the nineteenth century: "It seems that the Christ that has soome to us is an Englishman."

<sup>3</sup>º Artists often exhibit a more profound intuition: "Whoever he might or might not be, whoever he might be convinced that he was, he was surely a man, independently of whatever else he might have been. And he had the face of a man, a human face" (Bütchner 1974). This statement is at the beginning of Bütchner's book, which has splendid illustrations that span many centuries and cultures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Sed primum quod tune (ad primum usum rationis) housini cogitandum occurrit, est deliberare de se jon ("The first thing that happens to man (when he first reaches the use of reason) is to inquire about himself"; Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae 1-ll. q. 89, a. 6). Again: Primum quod eccurrit homini discretionem habenti est quod de se ipso cogitet, ad quem dato ordines is cut ad firem ("The first thing that happens to man when he reaches (the power of J discernment is to reflect on himself and direct all other things to this as an end"; ibid, ad 3). Could Jesus be an exception to this?

<sup>93</sup> See the excellent Christologies of Kasper (1974); Sobrino (1976); Rovira Belloso (1984); and González-Faus (1984), which, however, do not take into sufficient consideration—as Dupuis does (1994: 1997; 2002)—the fact that Christologies could be important for other cultures and religions, too.

At first sight I cannot understand a statement of this kind. I cannot prove that I am a flying elephant—that a human being is an elephant that flies. I must admit that for me the statement is incomprehensible. To understand a phrase correctly means to discover that it is intelligible, and thus to become convinced that what is understood is true. \*I am therefore compelled to limit myself to assert that a certain human individual, who is apparently sane, has made such an assertion, which I find incomprehensible. I nevertheless trust the other person and believe that for him the obtase holds a meanine that escapes me.

If I still want to decipher what that person might wish to express by that assertion, I may arrive at certain conclusions. Though I must confess that I myself have not reached such a state of consciousness, I have studied totemism, shamanism, and other analogous phenomena: I can therefore more or less imagine that a human being might succeed in identifying herself with an elephant. Those who have experienced the feelings and intelligence of these pachyderms can agree with me and also be able to achieve a kind of elephantine consciousness and claim with conviction to be an elephant. Widening my empathy to its maximum, I could even go so far as to assert, "I am an elephant." Yet I could not do this without a certain trepidation and some reservation, insamuch as I have not abandoned my human consciousness.

I must confess, however, that the assertion is not altogether intelligible to me and hat I can only give it a partial sense because I am able to empathize with someone I trust who says, "I am an elephant." In short, I can "believe" that the assertion "I am an elephant" could have a certain meaning for a very special human being, even though I mwself cannot fully teach this level or grade of consciousness.

The second part of the assertion, however, I do find altogether unacceptable—
"that flies in the skies." At this point I have to say that the man is either dreaming
or the prey of a hallucination. No real elephant, I object, has ever flown in the skies.
My hero here is certainly mistaken when he makes such a claim. The thing makes
no sense, and with all my good will and desire to believe him, I must nevertheless
conclude that he is either deceiving himself or all of us. Perhaps he is a very special
human being endowed with the supernatural power of flying and may identify
himself with an elephant—although not with an "elephant that flies" precisely
because elephants do not fly.

As I put rogether the two parts of the assertion, I have the comforting suspicion that the first part, too, is an illusion. If my noêma rejects both parts, my pisteuma can at most accept the first part of the assertion, although both the noêma and the pisteuma compel me to reject the second. We cannot believe in something that is nor credible, even though it is based on the authoritative assertion that Christ is God, that the church has a divine "hot line" or that the magisterium possesses a different kind of knowledge, which is higher or better. "If a thousand Scriptures assure me that fire does not burn, I will not believe them," the minimysaka said millennia ago.

<sup>94</sup> See Panikkar (1975c) for philosophical support for the next paragraphs.

The Approach 189

As most religious traditions assert, we must distinguish between rational and other possible kinds of knowledge. But we cannot contradict ourselves, Belief must be reasonable and reason believable. I can believe what I cannot understand, but I cannot believe what (for me) is not believable. I can believe anything so long as I believe it is credible. Tetrullian can defend credo quia absurdum because he believes that the impossible can be believable—thus unsettling the rational (natural) order. But he cannot say that he believes the unbelievable.<sup>59</sup>

In short, there is no reason to formulate any hypotheses unless we can give them some meaning. We cannot believe that "I and the Father are one" if this assertion is for us, a priori, meaningless. And it is in fact meaningless if we are closed to assertions that are based neither on the senses nor deducible from them. And we shall be closed to the meaning of these assertions if our life flows along only on sensory or purely rational levels—if, that is, we remain insensible to the third dimension of reality, blind to the mystical consciousness.

At the risk of giving the impression that I wish to project this experience onto Jesus Christ, or believe that this experience might be a shadow of Christ's experience, let us confront what I consider the three mahbiakhani of Jesus Christ. 86

<sup>&</sup>quot;See Schestow (1994), 311, the intelligent defense of Tertullian, with respect to the original famous phrase, which refers to the crucifixion: "Mortune est Dei fillus prorsus credibile quia ineptum est; et sepultus resurrexit: certum est quia impossibile" (God's son is dead, fully credible because scandalous; and, buried, He rose: it is certain precisely because impossible [De earne Christin]. 5). On this we must renounce the attempt to comment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> From mahā (great) and vākya (phrase). The Vedantic tradition has condensed the teaching of the Upanishad into five great phrases, called māhāvākyāni.

#### THE EXPRESSIONS

... ἐὰν οὖτοι σιωπήσουσιν, οἱ λίθοι κράζουσιν

. . . si hi tacuerint, lapides clamabunt

... if these should remain silent, the stones will shout out.

Lk 19:40; cf. Hab 2:11

It is almost superfluous for us to ask which of the three utrerances we are about to discuss is most relevant. Still, although all are interlinked, we may say that the first is central to the whole enterprise of Christian understanding.

After we have reproduced a few texts we shall offer a brief interpretation and conclude with an experiential comment.

conclude with an experiential comment.

First, let us bear in mind the Scholastic distinction between discerning, thinking, and understanding. We find the following in Thomas Aquinas (in *IV Sententias* 1, dit. 2, a, 4, a, 5, c):

- "Discernere est conoscere rem per differentiam ab aliis" (To discern is to know a thing by differentiating it from others).
- "Cogitare autem est considerare rem secudum partes et proprietates suas: unde dictiur quasi coagitare" (To think, on the other hand, is to consider the thing in its constitutive parts and properties, whence the derivation of cogitare from co-apitare).
- "Intelligere autem dicit nihil aliud quam simplicem intuitum intellectus in id quod sibi est praesens intelligibile" (To understand, however, is nothing but the simple intuition of the intellect in which it makes the intelligible present to itself').

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In what follows we reproduce the original Greek only when we think it is important. At times we present more than one translation so as to show different nuances in meaning. In the absence of references the translation is ours.

192 CHRISTIANITY

Thomas refers to a text of St. Augustine (De utilitate credendi XI.25), in which he makes a distinction between opinari, credere, and intelligere.<sup>2</sup>

Let us remember another distinction, beautiful in its Teresian simplicity:

¡Oh válame Dios cuán diferente cosa es oir estas palabras y creerlas a entender por esta manera cuán verdaderas son! (Holy heaven, how different it is to hear and believe these words than it is to experience them as true). (Moradas VII.1.8)<sup>3</sup>

Again, let us reflect on a classic text by Miguel de Molinos, virtually unknown today. He writes in the 1676 introduction of his work "Lac ciencia mistica no es de ingenio, sino de experiencia; no es inventada, sino probada; no leida, sino recibida" (Mystical knowledge is not the work of the imagination but the fruit of experience; it is not invented but rather lived: nor read, but received.)

The texts in this section encourage us to speak not on behalf of the stones, those "living stones" so dear to St. Peter (1 Pet 2:4–8), but rather in the name of that "crowd" (πλῆθος, [Lk 19:37]) of men and women of our age who are driven by a thirst for words that would express life, not simple recipes for know-how—even in spiritual matters.

# Abba, Pat*ē*r

#### The Texts

Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; take this chalice away from me! Yet not what I will, but what you will.

Mk 14:36; see also Mt 25:39; Lk 22:42; Jn 12:27

What a revealing reiteration! Abba means father and (patēr) means father. If Jesus spoke in Aramaic, He must have repeated the word. Now let us imagine that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The erymology bears its own importance (as truth: Évujoc), Today "to think" (pensary) to think so suppessar (so bear) the love that inheres in every "thing" so that it may reach its place in the cosmos (which also means harmony). To capire (from capore, to grasp) is more aggressive than intus-legere (or inter-legere).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Teresa de Jesús (1967), 439.

Molinos (1976), 103.

<sup>5 &</sup>quot;Even without wishing to venture into the desperate enterprise of analyzing Jesus's psychology ..." Thus Schillebeeckx (1985) begins one of his reflections on Abba. Elsewhere he concludes that "Christ's experience of Abba constitutes the source of his message and praxis" (125).

The Expressions 193

Mark (and his source, or sources) was pressed to do so in order to convey its ambivalence: on the one hand, "papa," "daddy," biological father, head of family; on the other, the name—however patriarchal—most common for defining the closest and least terrifying aspect of the deity that we find in numerous religions, including the Judaic-P in he light of many documents of ancient religions, we might ask ourselves if calling God Father and Mother constitutes an anthropomorphism, or, on the contrary, if calling parents Father and Mother might not be a theomorphism. In primordial times, the human relation with the Gods seems to be stricter than the purely biological one. The divine world is seen as the model for the human world, and no vice versa. Two-dimensional modern cosmology has lost the three-dimensional cosmovision of the ancients: "Dit nos respicium?" (The Gods observe and bless us), wrote the second-century African slave Publius Terentius (Phormia 817), accruating a popular belief, found also in Eastern texts, for example, [3±-quanigad 1.

Abba was probably maintained in first-century Christian Iturgies in order to stress the special relationship with the divinity to which the word alluded on Jesus's lips. Although He might have uttered the word frequently, it appears in the texts just once. At other times only πατήρ (ρατέγ) appears. In St. John's Gospel we find πατήρ μου (ρατέγ mon), "my father," thirty-five times. It is important to note that the only time the Aramaic word appears on Jesus's lips is in the almost desperate prayer in Gethsemane, when Jesus pleads to be spared that "hour," and then adds that God's will be done."

Jesus does not have any doubts, for He is convinced that God is His Father. He speaks of God as "my Father" in a provocative way—Kittel says "disrespectfully" in the light of His Judaic tradition. 13 He turns to Him as Father in the intimacy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For a good summary, see Schrenk (1967), esp. 949-59, and Quell (1967), 959-82, for the Old Testament. See also Heiler (1961), 464-666; van der Leeuw (1956) §20, 195-201, for a few references.

<sup>7 &</sup>quot;The invocation Abba is seen here as an experience of singular significance" (Schrenk [1967], 1006).

<sup>5 &</sup>quot;Abba is undoubtedly the most theologically dense word in the entire New Testament," writes González de Cardedal (1975b), 99, in the chapter "Abba and Its Christological Importance" (97–104), with many bibliographical references. The whole work is a valid contribution to the "Understanding of Christ in the light of the category of meeting" (xiii).

 $<sup>^9</sup>$  See Schrenk (1967), 985. The word "Father" is used 415 times in the New Testament, in most cases referring to God.

 $<sup>^{10}</sup>$  We abstain from listing the extraordinary number of studies on this topic. See the bibliography in the few works cited.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Kittel and Friedrich (1964), 1:6, whom others follow: "Israel's religious language and the formulas of prayer the *Talmud* has handed down ignore this word as indecorous and absurd..." (Bordoni [1991], 539).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See a summary with pre-Semitic and other sources in Botterweck and Ringgren (1973), 1:1-19. Although YHWH is called the father of the people of Israel, Ringgren asserts, "In the Old Testament YHWH is very rarely called Father" (17), and adds that "God as father does not hold any central position in Israel's faith" (19). Concerning the idea of Son in Israel's ealso 1:668–82.

of prayer: in jubilation (Mt 11:25; Lk 10:21), on the cross (Lk 23:34–46), in the highest prayer when He finds Himself facing death (Jn 12:27–28), in direct prayer with the Father (Jn 17:1, 5), and as He calls Him "holy" or "just" Father (Jn 17:25, and elsewhere).

The Aramaic word appears two other times in St. Paul's epistles. The context of these passages is our human invocation of the Father (Abba is a vocative), and we are able to pronounce the word in virtue of the Spirit in its relationship of true filiation.

For all who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons of God. The Spirit you have received is not a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons  $(\pi v \epsilon \dot{v} \mu \alpha \dot{v}) \cot \theta \cot \alpha \dot{c}$ ; pneuma huiothesias) enabling us to cry "Abbal Father!" In that cry the Spirit of God joins with our spirit in testifying that we are God's children  $(\tau \dot{e} \times v \alpha; rekna)$ ; and if children then heirs. We are God's heirs and Christ's fellow-heirs, if we share his sufferings now in order to share his splendor hereafter. (Rom 8:14–17)

When Paul invites us to shout out, "Abba, Patèr!" he affirms that, inasmuch as we are God's children, we are authorized to pronounce the word, and he immediately adds that both the divine Spirit and our own bear witness that God is our Father—that is, that we are His children. And it is this testimony of our spirit that prods us to speak of the Spirit of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

The same experience is described in the third text:

To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of His Son crying "Abba! Father!" You are therefore no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then also by God's own act an heir. (Gal 4:6-7)

Here again we discern a "vital circle," a kind of perichörèsis. It is because we are children that God sends His Spirit, and it is because God sends His Spirit that we are His children. It is Christ that Christian theology has seen as the "cause" of our filiation.

## The Interpretation

Two fundamental considerations issue from this text: Jesus calls God His Father and invites us to do the same by virtue of the divine Spirit that dwells in us.

What does this mean?

The first meaning is to be sought within the Hebraic tradition of the period, which echoes at least one branch of the Semitic tradition that stretches back two millennia. "God is Father"—and Father means He who generates, educates, corrects,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> See the bold and perhaps somewhat neglected phrases of 1 Cor 2:10-16, which in the present context are worth meditation.

protects, governs, loves. This meaning of Father undoubtedly belongs to a patriarchal culture that is, perhaps, open to criticism, although it is precisely for this reason that the word bears an "inclusive meaning" as giver of life (father and mother). Purified of its anthropomorphic bonds, the word may be interpreted as meaning source, origin, foundation—just as the subsequent tradition will understand the word "father" when employed in the Titnitarian doctrine. It has nothing to with either genus or sex. <sup>14</sup>

But in the second place, and surprisingly, from the very beginning, as His contemporaries noted, Jesus accentuated the fact that God is His father, His faddy, in a manner so intimate that the Christian tradition was led to interpret it literally that Jesus of Nazareth had no other father. Even if we can more or less reconcile this assertion with the existence of another purely human father not in competition with the divine Father, this is something of no concern to us at this time and place. We are only seeking to understand Jesus's experience. Without a shadow of a doubt He seems to have had a very intense experience of a divine filation.

The numerous texts in which Jesus refers to His Father have been so thoroughly certified and accurately studied that we need not return to that problem. Jesus calls God His Father.

Only one observation seems pertinent here. The relationship of Father to Son is so intimate that we slip into either an anthropomorphic idea of God (God is Man's Father) or a theomorphic image of Man (Man is God's Son). The classical theologies embrace the first—God is Man's Father (transcendent); contemporary theologies, the second—man is God's son (immanent).

Here again, an intercultural consideration of diatopic hermeneutics may help us build a bridge between these two perspectives. If the divine world is the model of reality—including ourselves—we start with God and must then say He is the Father. If the human world is the model, we start with ourselves and must then say that we are the children.

The last two texts are not reported as Jesus's words, although they do refer to Christ's central message, as one of His disciples understood; if Jesus really calls God His Father, those who have received the Spirit possess the same power of calling God their Father: they, too, are children. This happens when we discover that Jesus is our brother: those who have the same father are brother.

It is almost superfluous to remember that "to call" does not signify the simple act of naming in a purely nominalistic sense. Every calling, active or passive, signifies the bestowal of a mission along with its relative power (Rom 9:12; Heb 5:4;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In conformity with a certain Anglo-Saxon mentality, Lee (1993) writes, "It seems strange that Israel, almost intentionally and for a long time, seems to have avoided calling God its "Father." The reason might be sought in the fear of creating confusion with the fertility gods.

<sup>15</sup> As a very beautiful example we may cite González-Faus (1984). In a comment on John's prologue, in opposition to some theologians, he observes that "John sees no other divinity in Jesus than his being man" (331), and cites several times Leonardo Boff's phrase regarding Jesus: "God alone can be human to such an extent."

1 Cor 1:9; etc.). Modern consciousness has weakened the power of the name and of naming.

There is a difference between Christ's filiation and ours, a difference that seems to constitute a fundamental idea that is important to maintain in Christian self-understanding. Until now, this difference has been expressed in the assertion that Jesus is God's natural son and we are adoptive sons. Here we touch on a very delicate point that, once again, an intercultural reflection may help us understand. For a certain kind of mentality, which we could consider the product of Roman civilization, law, loaded as it is with all its juridical categories, is little less than ontologically real. For the people of Israel the relationship with the divine, founded on a pact and a promise, leaves God's transcendence intact. Israel is the people of God, and God is the shepherd, the master. The relationship is not one of kinship; were it so, it would be blasphemy. Christians, in conformity with Jesus's words, and in order to accentate the difference, assert that while we are adoptive sons, lesus is the natural one.

This theological proposition presents some difficulties, the first with respect to Jesus. The Word, second person, is certainly God's natural son. In the language of the councils. He possesses the self-same divine nature; Iesus, on the other hand, also possesses a human nature, like us. We might ask ourselves whether Jesus would then be a natural son through His divine nature alone or also be such through His human nature. If Jesus, as man, is not God's natural son, His incarnation, from God's point of view, is not real-it would constitute Thomistic monotheism. If Iesus as man is God's natural son, then nothing would prevent us too from being the same. In order to maintain the distinction, God is said to make an exception for Jesus, while excluding us. This agrees with a moral conception of the incarnation: Christ came upon earth solely because Man had sinned—a theme widely discussed in medieval theology and the source of profound division within the schools. The reason: At the heart of the discussions and divisions we find two Christologies: Christ redeemer (from sin) and Christ restorer (of creation-to the point of divine plenitude). The first has prevailed in Western churches and in popular devotion. On the other hand, many texts seem to give our sonship a value more real than that of being named heirs to certain rights, as we see developed profoundly in Paul, the great theologian of election and predestination (Rom 8:29-30: 11:1ff.).

To begin, we find the "Petrine" phrase that we "participate in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). This is not an example of the much-feared pantheism. We become participants in the divine nature by entering in communion with it ( $\theta$ eí $\alpha$ C KOLVOVOÌ

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> It is significant to note the embarrassment exegetes feel with respect to this passage, even though the epistel is not St. Peter's. See Leaney (1967), 107, who believes in a Stoic influence; Hauck, in Kittel (1964ff.), 5:80, cites it without comment, unlike his treatment of the Pauline texts, although, of course, there are theological monographs on 'divinitation.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Let us note that today we are rediscovering the doctrine of deification, even in St. Thomas, See Williams (1997), who ends with the following phrase: "The Summa does not contain an explicit question on deification because the argument of the last part of the work is (precisely) deification."

The Expressions 197

φύσεως theias koinōnoi physeōs). It is more than a participation. It is a koinōnia (communion). God is His very divine nature; it is through His power that we reach (γένησθè genēsthe) it. And it is through the work of the Spirit that we "become transformed in that same icon" (την αύτην είκονα μεταμορφούμεθά tên autên eikona metamorphoumetha, 2 Co 3:18). This metamorphosis bears the meaning of the whole adventure of creation and constitutes the Trinitarian perichoresis. The Gospel also tells us that Christ is the vine and we the branches (Jn 15:5). In commenting on these words, St. Augustine does not hesitate to say, "Unius quippe naturae sunt vitis et palmites" (The vine and the branches do in fact constitute the same nature [Tractatus 80]), and St. Thomas approved his statement. Paul himself is not afraid to cite a Greek poet to tell us that already in the present, "we are of his race"-that is, of his same ethnic origin (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν tou gar kai genos esmen [Ac 17:28]), as the preceding phrase asserts: "In him we live and move and exist" (we are, ἐσμέν)—and not only in the future (1 Cor 15:28). St. Luke reports words of Jesus that link our real sonship with the resurrection (Lk 20:36). All these texts speak to us of a real, not just juridical, filiation.

The other two texts that speak of Abba underscore the fact that "if we are childen, we are also heirs." We do not wish to discuss now whether textow (teknon, "child," but grammatically "neutral" in Greek) and viòç (buios, "son") mean the same thing or whether viò@ecid (buioshesta, "adoption") in Romans 8:15 means adoption as legal fiction or might have a less legalistic meaning. In any case, the texts tell us that we too can participate in Christ's sonship in relation to the Father. We are not told that we are heirs and thus possess the same rights as the children, but that we are really made children, and consequently also heirs. Sonship comes first. The texts, moreover, show that Christ is "the body's head," the reason for which we too participate in the divine nature.\(^{18}\)

For a different type of mentality the juridical fiction is not real, and thus an artificial, untrue sonship does not satisfy. Here we encounter once again the influence of the monotheistic ideology, which, so as not to weaken God's absoluteness, can see the incarnation only as a miracle that an omnipotent God performs, while making an exception for His own Son.\" For a Tinitarian conception, on the other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gregory of Nyssa defines Christianity explicitly as τῆς θεί ας φύσεως μίμησις, imitatio divinae naturae (imitator of the divine nature), in De professione Christiana (PG 46.2144).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See one of the many phrases of that giant whom I have called—ironically, and because of his monorheistic rigor—the greatest Muslim theologian. Thomas Aquinas: \*Unio [Inearmationit] relatio quaedam temporalis est, quae quidem realiter est in jusa natura assumpta, sed in Persona assumente secundum rationem tantum, sicut et de aliti relationibus ex tempore de Doe dictis, ut Dominus et buisumoid dictum est\* (The union [of the incarnatio]) is a certain temporal relation which is real in the very nature assumed [in Jesus] while in the Person who assumes [in the Son] is only a logical relation—that is, not real but only in the created mind; as all the other temporal relations that are attributed to God, as when he is called Lord, and so forth; In IV Sententias 1, d.3; III, d.2, q.2, a.2, sol.3, ad 2). For him the whole of creation is a relatio quaedam (Sum. theol. 1, q.45, a.3). Later we shall quote this rigorous monorheistic thought again: Sahkara would agree.

hand, the Son "equal" to the Father is He through whom "everything has been made" (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, panta di' autou egeneto [Jn 1:3]), so that the Only Begotren is also the First Begotren (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). Our filiation is a real participation in the divine nature that is realized to the extent to which we become what, with Christ, we are called to be (Col 3:1). Our divinization is as little docetic as the humanization of the Lopos.

This is what tradition asserts when it says that through grace we become Christ, while Jesus is what He is by birth—something that also takes place through the work of the Spirit (Lk 1:35). It might seem right to pause a little longer on this point inasmuch as we are meditating on our right—and duty—to exclaim (we roo) "Abba. Pater".

Let us recall once again the patristic saying, "If God becomes man, it is so that man too may become a true God." Here we may apply, in an inverse sense, the patristic fathers' argument against Arius: If Jesus Christ were exclusively man (as Arius maintained), He would be unable to divinize us. Were we to remain "human" alone, not even Christ's divinity would be necessary. A transcendent God has no need of a "God-man" in order to forgive or redeem us. In short, our filiation is real—and not only because it grants us the right to be "heirs."

What then is filiation?

Jesus is the natural son of God in a metaphorical sense. God has no wife, as Muhammad seems to have said itonically. Moreover, what we find here is no more than an analogy—and a very weak one—between human and divine nature, as a frequently cited conciliar ext notes (Denz., 806). The primum analogatum would signify that which generates life and is the source in which we participate: Natura naturans at maturans. The Son is He who receives from the fontalis plenitude ("fountain of fullness," in Bonaventure's words) precisely that "nature" that makes Him son. "In order to explain this nature, a whole metaphysics is necessary; we cannot even skim the them here."

Adoptive son is another metaphor. If the first metaphor is "natural," that is, taken from the "nature" of things, the second is cultural, insofat as it belongs to the juridical order. Filiation is a human invariant—all men and women are children. Adoptive filiation is only a cultural universal testricted to a certain group of human traditions and thus does not exist at the same level as the first metaphor.

Here a reflection on the "First Begotten" (πρωτότοκος; prōtotokos [Rom 8:29; Col 1:15; etc.]) would be appropriate, above all if Christian language wishes to make itself intelligible to other cultures in terms of so-called interculturation. "He

Necording to Aquinas, In Filio est esse Paternitatis quia in divinis non est nisi unum esse (The being of Paternity is in the Son because in the divinity there is but one being alone). Thus Thomas can say, "Tantus est Pater, quanta [est] tota Trinitus" (Sum. theol. 1, q.30, a.1, ad 4). See also q.42, where the equality of the divine persons is explained.

<sup>21</sup> See Panikkar (1972a), the first part (written in 1941) of a trilogy (nature, human nature, and the supernatural) that remains in pectore et in corde.

is the firstborn" (pārwo hi jātab!) says an Upanishad (SUII.16). The adoptive son is not a true son. The adoptive is a juridical fiction and implies a whole system of human law. The metaphor is not anthropomorphic like the first, but cultural, and makes sense only within a very specific culture—mostly for the regulation of the rights of honor and inheritance for foreigners. We are in a regime of slavery, of the "free and freedmen" (Rom 8:15). We are not God's slaves but the master's children. The slaves and the free possess the same human nature, but it is those who have been liberated" that inherit the kingdom. This liberation is not our merit but the work of the gratuitous goodness of the Father who has chosen us. All is coherent within a cultural matrix in which the first Christian ferment has inserted itself.<sup>22</sup> This culture is not however, universal.

To make God a jurist is legitimate, although such an assumption must be taken with a grain of salt. The metaphor would tell us that we are not really God's children but become such only accidentally, by an accidental grace—in order to avoid the pantheism in which we would fall unless we suppress the monotheistic vision.<sup>23</sup>

What we have just said is consistent with a Western juridical conception of grace and is in harmony with the dualism of Creator/creature. If, in a strict monotheism, Being is God, then our "participation" in being suffers an ontological degradation. "Taken in itself, the creature is nothing," we read in St. Thomas, "who knows St. Augustine's Trinitarian cry: "Deus supra quem nibil, extra quem nibil, sine quo nibil ext" (God, above whom there is nothing, outside of whom nothing, without whom nothing exists [Soliloquia I.4]). There is surely no doubt that there is no ad extra ("outside") in God, as the Trinitarian experience takes into account. And in the mentality pregnant with the Roman genius, juridical adoption constitutes a convincing hypothesis.

Within a monotheistic context we cannot be God's real children. It is important to avoid pantheism while at the same time we do not undervalue our filiation without reducing it to a natural necessity. After all, the subtitle of this book is *The Fullness of Man*, not "human fullness"—we are more than "human." Conscious of this reality, theology introduced the concept of the supernatural, an idea that carried with it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> The word ψιοθεσία (*Inniothesia*) appears only in the Pauline epistles (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Ep I:5; Gal 4:5) and signifies the gratuitousness of God's act, an act that is certainly real insofar as it bestows a real. not accidental, filation.

<sup>23</sup> In this juridical conception it is not repugnant to believe that "pagans" are not saved—as a good part of Christianity believed for centuries. See the Athanasian Creed.

<sup>31 \*</sup> Esse autem non habet creatura nisi sh alio, sibi autem, relicia, in se considerata nibil estimate prisa natualiter inest sibi nibil quame sos" (The creature han being (Panikkar [1972a], 110ff]). Let us also note that creation is nothing but a relation with the Creator, because "Creatio ness at matatio nisi seaudmai intelligendi tantum" (Creation is not the same as change except for way of conceiving), according to the Summa theologise (I, q.45, a.2, ad 2). We have already quoted Thomas saying. "Creatio in creatura non sit (eq.) nisi relatio quaedam ad creatorem."

certain difficulties.<sup>55</sup> The whole philosophical infrastructure must be thought out anew in a Trinitarian direction. It is Christ who makes it impossible to sustain both the man-God dualism and abvss.

St. John does not speak of "creation" (Gn 1) but says, literally, that we were "made," that the Logos generated us (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ εγέντο; panta di' autou egentel [h 13]). ½ Unquestionably, our filiation is real. St. Paul employs the metaphor of the body, of which Jesus Christ is the head and we the members, while all participate in the self-same Life. Therein precisely lies the mystery of Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, without any confusion yet also without any dichotomy. Christ is thus fully divine, even in His corporeal humanity—and we likewise, although we are what we are only becoming, or "as in a mirror, in veiled form" (ἐν ατίνιματι, en ainigmath) "in a confused manner" (1 Cor 13:12). Although pilgrims, we feel that we are also one with the Father. It is written that we have been given the Spirit (Rom 8:9), which makes us know that we dwell in the Son [In 14:23:1] in 3:24)."

The Johannine formulation expresses the Christophanic consecration: "We are called to be and really are God's children... We are now God's children, although what we shall be has not been manifested (ἐφανερῶθη; ephaneröihe) yet. We know that when He will be manifested we shall be like (ὁμοιοι) him" (1 Jn 3:1-2). The Christophanic experience is one and the same as our epiphany (Col 3:4). Even Paul states, "When the Christophany (Χριστος φανερῶθη Christos phaneröthe), which is your very life, arrives, then too your epiphany will appear (φανερῶθησεσθε phaneröthesbeh) with him in glory" (Col 3:49).

Vatican Council II itself states that "as children in the Son, we can exclaim in the Spirit: Abba, Father!" (Guadium et spes 22). Not even the Latin liturgy seems to be satisfied with a simple adoption; the Collect for the Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6), echoing Eastern theology, speaks of our "perfect" (that is, complete) "adoption." In short, if Christ calls God His Father, we too can live this experience through the gift of the Spirit (Rom 8:9). If we both (Christ and us) call God our Father, we can seek to understand what less might have said.

<sup>25</sup> De Lubac (1965).

<sup>26</sup> See some texts in the Summa thoologian: "Pater enim, intelligendo se et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, et omnia alia quae eius scientia continentur, concipit Verbum: us sic tota Trinitas Verbo dicatur, et etiam omnis creatura" (The Father, then, understanding Himself, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and all the other things which His knowledge contains, understands the Word is thus the whole Tininty is expressed in the Word as well as in every creature [I. q.3, a.1, ad 34]). The same thought is repeated with respect to the Son: "Respondeo dicendum quad in Verbo importatur respectus ad creaturam Deus enim, ognoscendo se, ognostic omnem creaturam. vinitum Verbum eius expressioum non solum Patris, set etiam creaturarum" (I reply by saying that the Word sustains a (direct) relation with creatures because, in knowing Himself. God knows every (other) creature. . . . His unique Word is the expression not only of the Father but also of all creatures [I. q.34, a.3]).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See St. Teresa who comments on this thought in *Moradas* VII.1 (Teresa de Jesús [1967], 439).

#### The Experience

I now submit—boldly but reverently—a description that I shall place on Jesus's lips:

You, divine mystery, whom my people call Father, You are truly the direct origin, he who generates what I am, You are the source from whom I descend. I feel that (your) Life passes through me, that my life does not come from myself but from a fount that not only gives me life in general but also the words, the ideas, the inspiration, and everything that I am. Everything that I say is always something I have "heard."

If Jesus had been born in an apaturuseya<sup>11</sup> tradition, He could also have asserted that His very language is nothing other than the manifestation of the primordial word—the Lagos, viac (TMB XX.14.2, TB II.8.8.4; Svetägara-bräbmana 1.4.4.1, etc.). The moment, however, that this word belongs to a monotheistic people, it explicates its experience by saying that, only through things and events, it discovers and reflects the Father's voice and will. It is because Peter intuited this that Jesus blessed him when He said "Thou art," although He felt the necessity of adding some attributes proper to His people's culture, such as "Son of the living God," "the Anointed One," and others still. Because Peter was too imbued with Judaic culture, Jesus asked him not to make this public.

In the language of the following centuries we could say that Jesus experienced the continuous creation, or better, the constant generation (by the Father). He felt Himself constantly generated, created, sustained, made alive, inspired by that invisiible mystery that many people call God and portray in the most diverse ways. This is the continuous incarnation, as we will explain later.

"Today you have been generated," "You are my beloved son," as He heard on the banks of the Jordan and on Mount Tabor—and Son remains His truest name. The filiation that constitutes it is, in a certain sense, the destiny of every being—whether she knows it or not—and occurs naturally in various degrees. We may sum up its message by saying that we are all children and that all things exist insofar as they participate in that filiation. He feels Himself at one and the same time Son and brother. What He teaches is that God is "Our Father," not His alone. We are all brothers and sisters inasmuch as we are all children.

What we notice here is a relationship that is indeed intimate and constitutive and yet also hierarchical. God is the Father; Christ is the Son; God is the Source, He is the river of living water that springs from the Father. Without the Father, nothing. He has learned obedience through experience, as Paul (or whoever wrote Heb 8:7-9) intuited so well. There is a difference between them; "The Father alone

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> The Vedas are called apaurseya (without author) because the mantras themselves do not need any additional reference to tell us what the words mean; otherwise, there would be an endless process.

is good" (Lk 18:19), the Son "listens," obeys (ob-audire), even when He ignores His 'goals" (Mt 24:36). Jesus is fully conscious of His vocation: to give the world the [Father's] Word (Jn 17:14) in order to return to the Father. At the end of His short life we could exclaim, "It is consummated" (Jn 19:30), as He yielded up His spirit into His Father's hands (Lk 23:46).

Does all this make any sense to us? Certainly. If, in one way or another, we cannot relive what these words entail, our discourse about Jesus would constitute a futile exercise in idle speculation. We also - and not we alone - find His words pregnant with "infinite life,"29 and so we are allowed an analogous experience. Influenced perhaps by His own polemical expressions in reaction to the Hebrews ("you are God" in In 10:34, a text that cites Ps 82:6), the Christian tradition has often said. "You are Christ"—alter christus—or, as I would boldly say, following Paul's teaching, ipse christus-"Christ Himself." We have already cited His phrase, which is all but impossible to translate: "Let your bearing toward one another rise out of your life in Christ Jesus" (Ph 2:5). The Greek reads, τοῦτο φρονεῖτε (touto phroneite, which is translated hoc sentite in the Latin Vulgate). The object of the verb phroneite is translated "mind" in the Authorized Version and the Revised Version, "attitude" in the New American, and "bearings" in the New English Bible. The implication is that one is to participate in the same spiritual experience, the same profound intuition that Iesus Christ had. This experience we are invited to live. For me all of this makes sense, and therefore I feel encouraged to relive and formulate my own experience in His language, the language of the Son:

Abba, Paser! I do not originate my very being, I am a pure gift. I have received everything that I am, including what I define as "mine." Everything is grace. I experience my contingency because it is not within myself that I find the ground of my being, the "reason" for my existence. Yet this does not signify alienation; it does not mean, that is, that this "reason" resides elsewhere, that it is external to me. Although I am not the ground, neither does that ground exist outside of me. Rather, it exists in the interior intimo meo ("in the innermost depths of my being") to cite, once again, the Confessions of the great African bishop Augustine (IIII.6.1).

In other words, the *Grund* is not an "other," a non-I, but a "thou," an immanent transcendence in me—which I discover as the I (and therefore as my I).

Not only do I discover my contingency in and through my experience, but I also experience that everything comes from You, mysterious source that many have substantialized as "supreme Being." To call thee "Father" unquestionably signifies a filial relation. It signifies the experience of being generated, of

<sup>29</sup> It is only in Fridolin Stier that I have found a beautiful translation of "life eternal" (ζωή αιώντος; zõe ainonios) as unendliches Leben, "infinite life." See Jn 12:50; 17:3; Rom 6:23.

The Expressions 203

gushing, so to speak, from a source and sharing its nature. It is in that river and in no other water that the source's water flows; nor does this mean that there must be a substance that exists beyond the Father's being. The term itself, "father," is a function, not a substance: the father procreates. My father is not a being who, among many other activities, also generates me. He engages in no other activity than this: generating. You are my Father insofar as you generate me. Thou art nothing other than being Father.

I am speaking of this experience of being procreated, generated, produced, given birth, not of the experience of perceiving an "other." I am neither substantializing nor projecting into the past something that, as an experience, can be directed to nothing other than the present. Nor am I "personifying." It is tather a question of experiencing the this as the fons et origo totius divinitatis, to cite the Councils of Toledo (Denz., 490; 525; 568); as the theotie, to echo again St. Paul's hapax legomenon (Col 2:9), or as the "silence" (sige) whence the word springs forth, as St. Irenaeus says. "And we too are conscious of our I both created and uncreated," a traditional theologian asserts. "O Undoubtedly, at a different time and in a different culture, Jesus's experience would rather have evoked the name of Mother, and the metaphor would probably have been more powerful and certainly more immediate.

I also feel that is not my exclusive privilege. Every being has thee as Father. Every being is generated by thee, font of everything, although it is only conscious beings who can call thee "Father."

We exist because "we are from" (ex-sistene), we proceed from this infinite source that is not limited by any name or, in the words of Eckhart, is sunder Namen (without name), ibber all Namen (above all names), imnominabilis (unnamable), and omninominalibus (namable by all [names])—appellations or nonappellations that are found in a millenarian, appohatic tradition. Neth. neti (BUIII).9.26).

Because words have been eroded and religious power abused, neither Father nor Mother, neither God nor even the Void or Mystery resonates any longer in the minds and hearts of many contemporaries. Why this erosion? Why this abuse? Because, perhaps, the mind as well as the heart has become "mechanized," as Lao Tze had foreseen a long time ago.

Now that I have established that the verbal formulation is relative, let me dedicate a paragraph to show that Jesus's language in uttering, Abba, Pater's is appropriate. First of all, the word is a vocative, and the three passages in which it appears present us with extreme situations: a cry, a shout, a prayer, accompanied even by a splattering of blood. It is a spontaneous manifestation of joy, of suffering or hope. It is neither the literary style in the third person nor a tale about others. It is personification alone that satisfies human nature, when, in extreme situations, that same nature experi-

<sup>30</sup> Boulgakov (1982), 193.

ences the unfathomable life of the creature. We experience a need to personify. An istadevatā is the most human way of carrying us close to this experience. We need to find the divine icon with which we can communicate. Moreover, "Father" does not stand only for source, power, and person. It also signifies protection, especially love-and therefore Mother. In the innermost recesses of our human consciousness we discover within ourselves not only the fact that we love but also that we are capable of loving, precisely insofar as we are loved. Every being has the need of both loving and being loved. Human love is a response. Love has been granted to us. Thinking—characteristic of the human being—is nothing other, as we have said. than to weigh (soppesare) the love that every thing has in order to reach its place in the harmonic texture of reality. Thinking is a qualitative more than a quantitative act. The moderator is the person who recognizes the tendency, the nisus, by which everything moves toward its place and knows how to direct events and things, without violence, to their ends-an action that cannot be brought to fruition without love. Although we do not always identify the source with love, we do perceive love as our tending toward a source, while at the same time we also feel that the love with which we are loved has been, in turn, received.

The source of everything is also the origin of love. Although often on a minor scale, we become conscious of the perichôrēsis we have cited so often. At times we do not respond to the same person with the same love with which we are loved but pass it on, so to speak, to a third person. For example, although we might not have reciprocated the love of our parents adequately, we try to bestow that love upon our own children. The "dance" continues. A current of love circulates throughout the three worlds. Love, to be sure, is no mere feeling; it is, rather, the dynamism itself of the real, the force that moves the universe—as so many sacred Scriptures and poets say.

In the third place, in a very strict sense, the Father unites power and love, two ultimate "elements" of the universe. The Father is superior to the Son; He is the protector. As we have already said, the symbol father also stands for mother, for the woman who gives life, existence, nourishment, and love, and signifies also sacrifice, sharing, participation in the same adventure, and therefore equality. The son is equal to the father. Abba, Pater means both superiority and equality. In brief, we are capable of reliving the Abba, Pater We are not orphans: the earth is our Mother, the sky our Father, as so many primordial and ancient traditions assert.

There are at least two ways of experiencing the Abba, Patēr—the experience of grace and, in a deeply paradoxical sense, the experience of contingency.

If I am fully conscious that everything I have and am I have received from the Father, from the Font, I also feel, at one and the same time, that everything is grace, that everything has been given to me, that the initiative itself is a grace that the "Father of lights" (Jas 1:17) grants. If I am, at the same time, the fruit of grace, if the Origin of my acting and being is not my I, what I discover in myself is my radical contingency. It is not I who sustains myself, who possesses the reason for my own being, for I am contingent. "I can do everything in him who makes me strong" (e'v mô vôvouquôvt µ è en tô

endynamounti me)—the one who gives me dynamism, power (Ph 4:13). In this experience of my weakness I discover that the ground of my being is much more solid, much stronger than it would be if it were rooted in myself. I cannot sustain myself by myself alone; it is that which supports me that sustains me: Abba, Patèr!

I can now read the story of the man of Galilee with a key that unlocks the superb way in which He realized this experience, the extent to which He perceived at one and the same time the closeness and the distance between Father and Son.

If mysticism tells us about the experience of ultimate reality, the experience of legus the Christ constitutes the experience of this equality and difference with Him who gives life, with the Source of the universe. Abba, Patèr Every person is a son, a daughter. In this way we can also understand what He said about children and the kingdom of God. Those who have the experience of a father or mother are not, strictly speaking, parents. And when many theologies comment on this passage, they betray—as I myself have done until now—the experience of an adult. It is the child who, in both joy and sorrow, utters "Father"—and here a capital elterer is appropriate. It is not a question of feeling dependence or love; it is rather a question of a primordial feeling of belonging. For this reason, today we can say, even better, "Mother"—something that was not possible, perhaps, for the historical Jesus. In order that we live this experience, it is not necessary that we be either saints or Pharisees, cultured or religious; it is sufficient that we have all been children. Not everyone is a father or a mother, although everyone has been a son or a daughter.

And here we arrive at a point in which I detach my experience from the old and venerable expression Abba, Patër and articulate the way many men and women including children, feel today. Just as children, in the process of growing up, become aware that their parents are not omnipotent, so in the same way the Abba, Patër also matures in a relation in which we no longer depend on an omnipotent father. Scripture calls us ouverpot (ym-ergoi; cooperatores in Latin) (1 Cor 3:9), and yet it is with hesitation that I say.

I can pray and believe in Abba, Pater but I must do so with the same suffering and pain with which, we have been told, thou prayed at Gethsemane.

The word "father" has lost much of its symbolism coday. Patriarchalism is bad, but the destruction of the family without offering any substitute is still worse. And we are increasingly aware of the difficulties implicit in a pious speech about a loving and powerful Father who permits the immense tragedies that have occurred in all ages and those even worse tragedies of our technocratic age—worse because they are not grounded in any religious justification. When religious power clearly abused the people's human religious sentiments, social injustices and human tortrures were presented and seen as bearing a religious sanction.<sup>31</sup> However perverse this was,

<sup>31</sup> Slavery and torture, for example, sought "justification" in the Bible (see Denz., 1483).

victims were able to bear them with less despair than today when secondary causes have become independent of God as the "first cause." Recall our discussion of the dalir earlier in the book.

What a relief when I discover that the old formula Credo in Deum Patrem omnipatentem does not correspond to your experience! It is precisely the opposite which you experienced at Gethesmane, and in an excruciating way, on the cross (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). You have experienced the divine fatherhood but not his omnipotence.<sup>32</sup> You have submitted yourself to his willb. but not his whins.

How could God's omniporence allow all this? Every effort to answer by saying that God's designs are inscrutable seems similar to the answer that "God reveals the Trinity precisely to humiliate our intelligence." I cannot believe in all these specious theological explanations (theologoumena). Abba, Patēr!, on the other hand, is a prayer that can spring only out of a lacerated heart. Yet it cannot be dehumanizing. And there is more.

Perhaps other cultures have shaped my experience. I can readily understand our need for personification but not the anthropomorphism of the individualistic interpretation of the divine figure of the Father. Abba, Patèr does not represent to me belief in an Other (as substantialized Being), nor, much less, in a Me. Neither does it signify dualism (God above and we below), nor monism (as a God that absorbs verything). It is here that the expression "My Father" acquires its full meaning. The Father belongs to the "I am" and makes it possible that I, too, exist. In the light of all this, I go beyond the innocent belief that my Father is almighty—and beyond the other scholarly appriss around this belief.

I do not think we will go astray if we see a connection between this experience of filiation and Jesus's third and last temptation, as well as our own—the dizziness one experiences at great heights (Mt 4:8). From the heights of political, economic, intellectual, and above all spiritual power, we seek the "kingdoms of the earth" and

The pariahs belonged to the karma and dharma; human sacrifices were considered necessary for the life of the world, and so forth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> The word omnipotens, translated "almighty" in English, is used in some of the first creedal confessions to translate the Greek pantobration. But its real referent was the Lord, the dominus omnia potens, which means to say, He who has dominon over everything like a king and in a theocratic sense, not as an absolute being. The Letter of the Apostles (from about the year 160), says in the first paragraph, in patrem dominatorem universi (Denz., 1). We also find Credo in unuum Patrem omnium dominatorem (Denz., 1, 1, 41–42, 44, 46, 50–51, 60, 64, 71, and elsewhere). The Vetus Latina, however, has omnia potens. It was St. Jerome who consecrated omnipotens in the Viglage. Trebolle (1995) observes that pantobratio' was purely a translation of the divine title of Yahueh tseudo' (God of the Armies) and was also translated as kyriot ton dynameôn (Lord of the Powers) (147). Michaelis explains in Kittel (1964) in pantobratio refers to the "supermacy" of God, not to the "power to do all things" (3:915).

"their glory" (δόξά doxa) and we think that everything can be ours—so that, of course, we dream to make the best use of it. Jesus did not choose "the lesser of evils" by kneeling, in order to become the new "prince of this world"—and bringing it to the Father.

We wish to change the world from a position of power; we wish to dominate politics and economics in order to institute "the kingdom of God"—that kingdom that does not arrive "in ways that can be observed" (Lk 17:20). This is the great temptation of Christendom. Yet neither Francis of Assisi nor John XXIII made use of His power. The Abba, Pater is no pictistic effusion. Man's divinization is not the apotheosis (ἀποθέσσιζ apotheosis) of the individual. Once again the vision is not monothelistic.

However modified by the following text—which underscores the equality of Jesus and His having the same nature as the Father—this first experience is as incradicable and definitive as the second. As some mystics maintain, even when human consciousness can attain its highest stage and that selfsame consciousness breaks on human shores, it shows an infinite difference from the source. (It is we humans who speak of "infinite knowledge.") This is precisely what the experience of the Trinity is. We know that we are insertred within a cosmotheandric perichörèsis. 39 God is mystery, and we, too, exists within this mystery.

#### The Father and I Are One

### The Texts

Just as the first exclamation was not unique but the expression of a conviction manifested many times in different forms, so this second assertion—of the equality of Jesus with the Father—pervades Jesus's entire message. Yet one must caution that this assertion must be understood in tandem with the many details that the writers of the Gospels or Jesus Himself have been able to introduce.

Here we must accentuate the importance that a certain tradition, as well as modern exegesis, attributes to the distinction between the Synoptics and St. John's Gospel. <sup>34</sup> We are interested not in the literal statements of Jesus—the so-called problem of the ipsissima uerba—but in the complex figure of Christ, as not only the first generations but also Christians of all ages—that is, the church—have understood it. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> We are able to apply the well-known difference between Creator and creature (Denz., 806) also to the Trinity. Nothing is finite in the Trinity. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are infinitely diverse.

<sup>34</sup> Massa (1995) once again underscores this; see p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Dupuis (1994) writes that if we are not certain of the "ipsissima verba" (the very words [of Jesus] themselves), the "ipsissima intentio" (the very intention itself) may be confirmed with certainty (52).

We insist on this point. Either Christians, victims of a collective hallucination, have projected onto the figure of Jesus Christ desires, anxieties, and expectations, transforming them into what they wanted Him to be, or the man truly is what they believe. See Even in the first case, the fundamental question remains.

The Buddhist tradition has made the Buddha a bodbisattvat. The Vishnu tradition has transformed Krishna into a God. The Chinese have transformed Lao Tze into a wise man. All these traditions have advanced such interpretations because there is something in the human being that urges it to do so. A two-dimensional vision fails to satisfy Man. Like Sankara and so many others, St. Augustine speaks to us of a restlessness in the human hear. If the divine is not in fact Man's ultimate ideal, there is no reason for God to exist for Man, for He would then become either useless or diabolical. What we wish to say is clear: unless, in our case, Christ is God's revelation, He is Man's. But let us return to the exts.

Either the phrases we are commenting on make sense to us today, or they are simply words uttered by "an elephant that flies in the skies." Perhaps we could accept a God who spoke incomprehensible phrases, but Christ would then be no more than a divine awativa and not a real man. No man can utter the words as He did if they are completely outside the human range and thus beyond our comprehension.

We choose three out of many possible texts. The first is John 10:30.

'Έγιὰ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἔν ἐσμεν (egō kai ho Patēr hen esmen). Ego et Pater unum sumus (in the Latin Vulgate). I and the Father are one.<sup>37</sup>

The immediate context of this mahāvākya is illuminating. It reveals a disputation reproduced and reelaborated, I should say, at a later time, but in any case intense. After He uttered this statement, the Jews wanted to stone Jesus, stone Him to death: it was a matter of life or death.

We shall not describe the context of the entire passage but will offer only one comment: throughout the entire dispute Jesus does not attenuate His statement. Neither does He minimize His answer; on the contrary, He is exacerbating it as He dares to propose a "blasphemous" exegesis of a Hebrew psalm, "You are Gods" (82:6).38 All this is summarized at the end of the disputation when Jesus asserts that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> It is sufficient to mention Arthur Drews's book The Christ Myth (1909; repr., New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), with all the religiouswissenschaftliche discussions that are still pertinent today.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Let us compare these three with other translations: "I and my Father are one" (AV)." I and the Father are one" (RSV); and "My father and I are one" (NEB); "Le Père et moi, nous sommes un" (BJ); "Ich und der Vater sind eins" (Neuer Jerussalemer Bibel and Rosch); "Jo i el Pare som una sola cosa" (Montserrat); "Jo i el Pare som u" (Mateos/Rius Camps); "Yo yel Padre somos una sola cosa" (Néaer-Colungs).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> See Botterweck and Ringgren (1973) in very many articles (for example, 1:681), and Strack and Billerbeck (1922ff., 2:542ff., and 3:223ff.) for the Hebrew Bible context.

His deeds were to manifest the veracity of His words. We are asked to accept the testimony of a life and acknowledge, citing John 10:38, that

'Ev ἐμοὶ ὁ πατὴρ κὰγὰ ἐν τῷπατρί (En emoi ho Patēr kagō en tῷ patrī). In me est Pater, et ego in Patre (New Vulgare).

Pater in me est, et ego in Patre (the classic Vulgare).

The Father is in me and I in the Father.

In another analogous passage (Jn 17:21-23) this unity is extended to all who will believe in Him: "Because we are all one. As you, Father, are in me, and I in you, may they too be one with us... I in them and you in me that they may be perfected in unity." This passage introduces us to our second text, John 14:9:

'Ο έωρακὼς ἐμὲ ἐώρακεν τὸν πατέρα (Ho heōrakōs eme heōraken ton patera).

Qui videt me, videt [et] Patrem (Vulgate).39
He who has seen me, has seen the Father.40

If the first context explodes with danger and dialectical sparks, the second is suffused with grief and sadness, inasmuch as it constitutes part of Jesus's last words, His farewell speech. After hearing Jesus speak so much about the Father, Philip boldly asks Jesus to show him the Father. The answer reveals a certain sadness: "Philip, I have spents on much time with you, and you still don't know me?"

Jesus does not say, "I have already been with you a long time speaking about the Father, and you still do not know *Hims.*" He does not say *Him.* Instead, He says me. "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). (Thus, "You, then, have not seen me.")

John reports the same idea in a less intimate, more public context during Jesus's last entry into Jerusalem: "Jesus then shouted in a loud voice, 'He who believes in me does not believe in me but in him who has sent me. The one who sees me sees him who has sent me" (Jn 12:44–45).

What we would like to underscore is the fact that these statements made sense for Jesus and for those who placed them on Jesus's lips from the beginning—and for innumerable generations since. They do not seem to find the assertion incredible. Perhaps He is saying that He is an elephant (and so, too, are we). Yet this is not as

<sup>39</sup> Some Greek texts have the word και (kai), which also appears in the Vulgate. And in the New Vulgate we read, "Oui vidit me, vidit Patrem."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> There are other translations: "Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father" (NRSV and the NAB); "He who sees me sees also the Father" (Confravernicy/Challoner Rheims Version); "Qui mia vu a vu le Pere" (BJ); "Wer micd gesehen hat, hat den Yater gesehen" (Neuer Jerusalemer Bibel); "Qui m'ha vuit a vui, ha viit al Pare" (Montsetras); "Qui em weu am present esta veient el Pare" (Marcos (Rius Camps); "Ed que me ha visto a mi ha viist a Plare" (Marcos (Rius Camps); "Ed que me ha visto a mi ha viist a Plare" (Marcos); "Ed que me ha visto a mi ha viisto a Plare" (Marcos).

210 CHRISTIANITY

inadmissible as if He were to say that the elephant flies in the sky. What these texts do is to make us revise—and revise radically—our notion of God as separate, inaccessible, and Other.

From another perspective, let us also add John 6:57:

Καθώς ἀπέστειλέν με ὁ ζῶν πατὴρ κὰγὼ ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα καὶ ὁ τρώγων με κὰκεῖνος ζήσει δι' ἐμέ (Kathōs apesteilen me ho zōn Patēr kagō zō dia ton patera kai ho trōgōn me kakeinos zēsei di' eme)

Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem, [:] et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me. (Vulgate and New Vulgate)

As the Father, who is life, has sent me and I live for the Father, so he who ears of me lives for me 41

Whether the context concerns the Eucharist is disputed. The unity between Jesus and His Father is extended to all who will join in eucharistic union with Him. Let us set aside one of the famous \$\phi\0 \text{e}\text{in} \( (\nabla \text{e}\text{in} \text{in}, \nabla \text{g}\text{o}\text{sm}\) statements of the Johannine Jesus, John 8:58, which echoes Yahweh's traditional self-description, "I am who am" (Ex 3:14). We find another polemical "I am" at the climax of Jesus's trial (Lk 22:70). We might also note that the phrases in which Jesus uses "I" have all been carefully analyzed. We also set aside another elusive statement that Jesus utcreed when He was openly asked who He was (Jn 8:25), a text that is difficult to translate. However important the various \$\nabla \tilde{g}\tilde{e}\text{in}\tilde{i}\tilde{s}\tilde{e}\t

# The Interpretation

Although a more animistic and less individualistic interpretation of these texts could be very helpful, I will merely try to reproduce for the general reader the experience that these words presuppose.

<sup>41 &</sup>quot;As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who east me shall live because of me" (NEB); "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (AV); "De même qu'envoyé par le Père, qui est vivant, moi, je vis par le Père, de même celui qui me mange vivra, lui aussi, par moi" (BJ); "Wite mich der lebendige Vater gesandt hat und wie ich durch den Vater tebes, so wird pelder der mich ists; durch mich leben" (Neuer Jerusalemer Bibel): "Aixt com jo, enviar pel Pare que viu, visc pel Pare, aixt qui em menja a mi viurà a causa de mi" (Montserrat); "A mi m'ha enviat el Pare, que viu, jio visc gràcies al Pare; aixt, també qui em menja a mi viurà gràcies a mi" (Mateos/Rius Camps).

<sup>42</sup> See Stauffer in Kittel (1964), and in general Lamarche (1965) and Liébaert (1965), along with the other parts of vol. 3, all of which are correlated with a rich bibliography.

What stands out clearly in these words is the traditional perithörētis, which is not limited here to the intra-Tilmitearian sphere but extends to the whole of creation. The text seems to say that there exists a current, a Life, that flows from the Father to Christ and all who communicate with Him. According to Thomas Aquinas, "Quaecumque sunt a Deo ordinem babent ad mincem et ad ipsum Deum" (Whatever things come from God are related both among themselves and to God [Sum. theol. 1,447.a.3]). This has always been a common belief. According to the most ancient Christian tradition, if Christ is one person of the Trinity, then His material body is also intermeshed in the Trinitarian life—just as, in Him, we are also emmeshed in the Trinity or chose this idea in poetic fashion: 'And the Father and the Father along; and the Son and the Son alone; and the Son will love the Father and the Father along; and both will constitute but one sole joy (the Spiriti.'')

From a monocheistic point of view, these "blasphemous" confessions seem to threaten the radical separation of the human from the divine. This constituted Jesus's challenge, something the first Christian thinkers well understood. "God becomes man so that man may become God," as we have a laredy nored. What we see here is a bridge, a bridge we are capable of crossing, Jesus seems to be denying that an abyss exists between the human and the divine. And it is precisely for this reason that He eliminated fear and preached love.

The subtleties of Sr. Thomas are well known: in order to defend the divine absonances, he asserted that "omnis relatio quae consideratur inter Deum et creaturam, realiter quidem est in creatura: ... non autem est realiter in Deo" [every relation between God and creature is real in the creature though not in God [Sum. theol. q.2, a.7). Whence, "hace unio [divinae et humanae naturae] non est in Deo realiter, sed solum secundum rationem tantuem" (this union [of divine and human nature] does not exist in God in reality but only in reason [see ibid., ad 1; see also Quaestiones de quadified 1, a.2; IX, a.4).\*\*

This is not the time for further comment; we wish only to underscore the fact that the Thomistic system develops out of the monotheism that is Judaic in origin and bears an Aristotelian imprint, even though Aristode's Beôç (theas) is quite different from Thomas's Deus ("God"). A clear example of this is the reduction of Christ to His instorical function as redeemer. In this fashion, if Man had not sinned, Christ would not have become incarnate (Sum. theol. III, q.1, a.3), "while acknowledging the opinions of others. Our opinion is Trinitarian—as we have explained elsewhere, cosmotheandrian."

In addition to the way some modern traditions offer readings of the first text

<sup>43</sup> Turoldo (1996), 210. Let us recall St. Augustine: "Et erit unus Christus amans seipsum" (And there will be one sole Christ who loves himself).

<sup>44</sup> See n. 16 above.

<sup>45</sup> We should mention St. Thomas's honesty in acknowledging the possibility of other opinions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Panikkar (1989a; 1993a). See also Sherrard (1992), 10, 147, who uses the term theoanthropocosmic vision. I employ the term in a more limited way both because of cacophony and out of respect for the Greek Orthodox tradition that speaks of the "theandric" mystery.

212 CHRISTIANITY

that invert the order of the phrase and add the possessive in light of the context, we should note how the plural of the verb is used. The text does not say, "I am one with the Father," nor does it say, "I am equal with the Father," Rather, it says, "I and the Father are the same"; "we are one," one relation. That is to say, there is a definitive "we," an ultimate "we"-I and the Father. There is the Father and the Son, and they are different. The Father is Father and the Son is Son. But the Father is Father because He is Father of the Son, because it is He who generates. And the Son is Son because He is Son of the Father who generates Him. A father without a son would not be father - a son without a father would not be son. The father is father-of-theson and the son is son-of-the-father. This paternity and filiation constitute their entire "being." They are pure relation. In more philosophical language, their Being is not Substance. Their Being is relational: even grammatically, their being is a verb.

Nothing exists outside the Trinity, nor is the Trinity subordinated to Unity. A real divine nature or essence common to the Trinity, though distinct from Father. Son, and Spirit, would convert the Trinity into a pure modalism. To speak of three essences or natures either makes no sense or would signify tritheism. God is neither one (a substance) nor three (three Gods). God is the ultimate and infinite correlative of reality—"For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom 11:36; see also 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16), Deus ex quo, per quem, in quo omnia, in the classic Latin phrase.

Let me insist again, both identity and difference exist. Father and Son constitute the difference while identity is this One—ëv (hen), unum (a relation). A simple but important observation is now in order. An expression suitable to what we are saving need not have resorted to the current term "difference." Although the Father and Son are certainly not identical, neither are they different. They could be different only on a common plane that would allow a difference between them. If we consider the Abba experience in depth, we would understand that the Father is Father and nothing else, and that the Son is nothing except Son. Neither Father nor Son is a substance.47 Being what we are, we are one.48

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> The oblivion of tradition is at times surprising, if not suspect. To give just one illuminating example from Gregory of Nazienzen: "Οὕτε οὐσίας ὄνομα ὁ πατήρ . . . οὕτε ένεργείας, σχέσεως δὲ καὶ τοῦ πῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὸν υίὸν ὁ πατήρ, ἢ ὁ υίὸς προς τὸν πατέρα" (Oute ousias onoma ho Patër . . . oute energeias, scheseös de kai tou põs echei pros ton huion ho Patêr ê ho huios pros ton patera. In Latin, "Nec essentia nomen est Pater, o viri acutissimi, nec actionis, sed relationem eam indicat, quam Pater erga Filum habet, vel Filius erga Patrem.... Ut enim in nos haec nomina germanam quandam coniunctionem et necessitudinem declarant, ad eumdem modum, illic quoque genitorem ac genitum eamdem naturam habere significant (Father is not the name of a substance [an essence, a thing]; it rather indicates the relation which the Father has toward the Son or the Son toward the Father. . . . Just as among us these names indicate a certain homogeneous conjunction and necessity, so with respect to what we have just said, both he who generates and he who is generated possess the same nature" [Orațio theologica XXIX.16; PG 36.96]).

<sup>48</sup> Gregory also writes, "Do you perhaps wish to become a theologian? Respect the commandments!" And he proceeds to advance reasons: "praxis is the way to contempla-

Father and Son are not different—they are correlative. One implies the other, and one cannot exist without the other. The difficulty in understanding this disappears the moment we explain that both names are nothing but relations. Relation is in fact the category of the Trinity—and Advaita. The relation between Father and Son denies the duality (Father and Son, and vice versa—one not two: "we are one") without falling into a monistic identity (for the Father is not the Son, and vice versa. Insofar as it is relation, relation is one (the Father does not exist without the Son, and vice versa). Relation is the fundamental category that governs all that is.\*

The expression "my Father" here assumes its most profound meaning. The Pharisees had replied to Jesus, "Our Father is Abraham" (Jn 8:39). But Jesus refutes them, saying, "If God were your Father, you would then love me" (In 8:42), as if to say, they would understand that power comes from the Father alone (see Jn 5:19). The expression "My Father" corresponds to the controverted "only-begotten" (µovoγενής unigenitus of Jn 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 Jn 4:9).50 Here we must refer to the controversy about the word πρωτότοκος (prototokos; primogenitus; "firstborn" in Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; and Rev 1:5).51 Actually, Jesus never uses either of these expressions: hence we may interpret His condition of Son as exhaustive, not exclusive. Jesus is the only son not in the sense of being the offspring of a father who could have had many other children but in the sense of the sole filiation of a Son who continues to be generated semper nascens, always in the process of being born from the Father, as Eckhart would say, 52 In this sense the Son can be one alone inasmuch as the Father constantly generates Him. But in this filiation it is we, too-and the whole of creation—that exist (Gn 1:3) as we wait and hope: "Creation itself yearns for the revelation of God's children.... We too moan within as we wait for God to

tion" (Oratio theologica XX.12; PG 35.1080). This is the reason for my interest as well as suspicion. What is suspect is that a certain theology has lost the contemplative spirit. Vis theologus aliquando fieri ac divinitate dignus (thig Beothmos, Géco). To be worthy of divinity is the requirement for authentic theology, if one is not to utret unworthy words about the ultimate mystery. The following addition is important: Πρόζις γαρ ἐπίβασις Θεωρίας (actio enim gradus est ad contemplationem) [Praxis is the introduction to contemplation]).

<sup>49</sup> See Krempel (1952). I have already indicated my view that this "radical relativity" seems to be a human intuition that is virtually universal.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> The NEB translation of Jn 1:18 is "Father's only Son," an expression that does not render well the idea that is still vaguely preserved in "only begotten Son," in the KJ. The translation of the Italian Episcopal Conference is very clear: "Only begotten" (unigenito). The German-language Neuer Jerusalemer Bibel version is ambivalent: "Die Einzige, der Gott ist und am Herzen de Vaters vollt."

<sup>3</sup>º The NEB also avoids the literal translation of the first text: "his is the primacy over all created things" ("born before"). The AV offers "the first born of every creature." The Italian Bishops' Conference edition has, "Generated before every creature." For an exegesis of the various uses of the word, see Michaelis in Kittel (1964–74), 6891–82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> In commenting on Jn 1:1, Eckhart writes: "Et si semper in principio, semper nascitur, semper generatur" (And if it is always in the beginning, it is always born, already generated (Lateinische Werke III.9).

make us His sons and redeem our whole body" (Rom 8:19–23).<sup>33</sup> It is well known that the word primagenitus was eliminated from the creed in order to avoid Arius's interpretation. Arius adopted this term to support the thesis that Jesus was human and only human: the "firstborn among many brethren" (which, interestingly, is exactly how the KJ translates Rom 8:29).

It is important to remain conscious of correlations in whose absence we could easily misunderstand this and other texts. In a philosophical sense, the matter is simple. If we do not grasp the relation in itself, we become "victims" of dialectics, assuming that the sole way of grasping differences is to leap from A to B and especially from A to non-A. It is substantialistic thought that sees first A, then B, and afterward the relation between the two. Only an intellect that does not pretend to intus-legere but rather experiences an immediate inter-legere is able to grasp relation directly. And this is the same thinking we find in nondualistic Aduatia. Once it has transcended a subject-object individualism, Aduatia becomes conscious of reality such as it presents itself, without engaging in either analysis or synthesis, precisely because it does not begin with an a priori that is ungrounded in reality.

In our case, there is a Fountain, a source of my being, a mysterious Fountain of Being that is neither my ego nor my non-ego. The origin is what it is only insofar as, in fact, it originates. The Father is father because He generates; the Son is son because He is generated. They constitute two poles of the same reality, a "reality," however, that is nothing other than the relation that constitutes both poles.

This relation, in which the whole universe is involved, does not result in a final monism; it is not closed, because it is the Spirit that keeps it open. The Son's return to the Father does not move, so to speak, through the same path that fatherhood does. To be generated is not the same as to generate. To receive is not the same to give Passivity is not activity. Here the locus of the Spirit is found also in the doctrine of the filioque, even though "through the Son" is a more plausible expression. Bonaventure calls the Son Person amedia Trimitatis, "while Jakob Böhme said that "God is person only in Christ." 55 K. Augustine asserts that God's Son is the "Father's art" (ars Patris), and St. Bonaventure argues that "'I and the Father are One,' because, seen as relation, fatherhood and filiation are not two." 56 To repeat, it is only from a substantialist point of view that to start from A is not the same as to start from B. On the contrary, "The way up is the same as the way down," as Heraclitus says (Fraz. 60).

<sup>3</sup>º Which the Catalan Interconfessional Bible translates: "... anhelant de ser plenament fills, quan el nostre cos signi redimit, "which neither the BJ nor the NJB, even in the English version. translates.

<sup>54</sup> See his Collationes in Hexaemeron I. n. 14 (Opera Omnia 5:331-33).

<sup>55</sup> In Hartmann (1890), 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Augustine, De Trinitate VI.10.n11; De reductione artium ad theologium n20.

#### The Experience

I experience the act of living as a bond with the Father, as a source of life. Y I feel that this life has not only been granted me but has, in addition, shaped me to be me that I am myself-able to say "my Life" as Christ said "my Father." I feel this life flowing in me as a continuous creation and incarnation. "As the Father has life in himself, so he gave (Edoseve vdeken) to the Son to have life in himself." (In 5:26). "8 Just as the source and the river share water, so do we share life."

It is perhaps opportune to return once again to John's words so that we may express this experience and speak of the future rather than the past: we are children and therefore spring from the same water, the same seed, even though what we shall be has not yet been revealed (οῦπο ἐφανερῶθη ομρὸ ephanerðithē [1 Jn 3:2]). Christophany has not yet been fully manifested.

The water must be purified, even though it is already there; the experience of our divine filiation is a human experience. "Not only are we called God's children, but we really are" (1 Jn 3:1). We are brahman, but do not know it.

Is not life itself perhaps the adventure of making one out of two?—utraque unum (Ep 2:14), making the two into a One that is no number? Once again, it is the experience of the Trinity. Allow me to say all this in my own words.

"I and the Father are one" to the extent that my ego disappears, and my ego disappears to the extent that it allows itself to be shared by whoso-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Aquinas writes, "Prius vita quam doctrina" (Life [is] before doctrine), adding: "Vita enim ducit ad cognitionem veritatis" (Life in fact leads to a knowledge of truth), because, as he knew, "Vivere viventibus est esse" (To live is, for the living, being); see Aristotle, De Anima [137] [415b13]).

St. Augustine has commented in In Iohan. XXVI.19 that, although the Father is greater than he (Jn 14:28), Jesus can say, "Vivo propter Patrem" (I live for the Father [Jn 6:57]). We can therefore say that we "live because of Christ, who, despite this (relationship), is creater than us."

<sup>&</sup>quot;St. Augustine expresses this idea, which has perhaps been forgotten by a certain kind of heology, in a concise way: "Quae est ergo doctrina Patris nis verbum Patris? I gae ergo Christus doctrina Patris, is verbum Patris. Sed, quia verbum not potest esse mullius sed alticuius; et suam doctrinam dixit, se ipsum; et non suam, quia Patris est Verbum. Quid enim tam tuum est quam tatt et quid tam non tuum quam tis silicuius es quod est." (What is the Father's doctrine if not the Father's Word? Thus, if Christ Himself is the Father's Word. He is the Father's eaching. But since the Word cannot be the word of nobody but surely of somebody, in speaking of Himself Christ also asserted that He both was and was not His doctrine insofar as He was the Father's Word. What is yours more than yourself? And what is yours more than yourself if what you are is only in respect to another?) See In lohan, XXIX.3; PL 35,1629. Augustine is commenting on In 7;16: "Wy teaching is not mine but belongs to him who has sent me."

ever comes to me, "feeds" on me or, seeing me, sees not "me" but what I ay—sees, that is, what I am. This is what I experience when I possess that transparency which is always more pure the more free I am from my small ego. When my ego imposes itself, others begin to compete and often confront merely their own projections. That is, they face what they already believe and imagine they are. My ego then becomes a wall, and they bounce against it.

When, on the other hand, I am transparent, free of every fear, I am truly myself, my Self: Insaparency allows a spontaneity that springs from me only when I am pure. It is then that I experience a poverty of spirit. The kingdom of the heavens is mine when nothing belongs to me. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3) has nothing to do with economic questions: it is, rather, an invitation to discover that the whole universe is mine, or rather, is me when it is not a question of a "me"—an ego that interefrees with this kind of belonging. This idea entails neither a pantheistic confusion nor a negation of personality. If I am nor mine and discover myself as a you, a you of the Father, then I am the whole of reality seen from the small window I shall call mine: "I and the Father are one."

"The pure in heart shall see God" (Mr 5:8) expresses the same experience. The Beatitudes are neither doctrines nor moral dictates nor categorical imperatives but, rather, externalizations of the most intimate experience: if I do not desire anything for my ego, I am everything and have everything. I am one with the source insofar as I, too, act as a source by making everything that I have received flow again—just like Jesus.

This is not pride. It is, rather, the experience of the Easter of the resurrection. Christian spirituality ends nor with Good Friday but with Resurrection Sunday, which Pentecost makes real to us—a situation that does not divinize by dehumanizing us but, on the contrary, humanizes us by divinizing us. We certainly do not always live at the highest level, though every person thirsts for the infinite and searches for a water that satisfies, howsoever fleeting and hidden it might be.

The person who listens to me surely hears my voice, sees my face, reads my thoughts, suffers from all my limitations. Yet it does sometimes happen that

<sup>6°</sup> See the courageous statement of St. John of the Cross, who says that everything is his. White nex the heavens, mine the earth, and peoples. . . God himself is mine because Christ is mine and everything is for me" (Maximas y sentencias 25). The philosophic expression of this experience is man conceived as microcosm. See Plato, Timaeus 300, 44D: Aristote, Phys. VIII. 2 (225–256; 26–27); Philo, Qui rerum divinarum herex XXXI.15° (Man is a small world and the world a big man"); De migratione Abrahami XXXIV.220 ("The world is a bigger and more perfect man"). De opifica mundi XXVIII.8 ("Man is a mall hexen").

The Expressions 217

someone hears through my voice, sees through my face, perceives beyond my thoughts, intuits behind my smallness. Those who truly see, I dare say, already see the Father, the mystery, the reality 61 And this is possible only if this intimate union is neither egotistical nor conserved but rather shared, in service and love. These experiences are perhaps more common than we might believe.

Christ did not come to "teach" doctrines as much as He did to communicate life (Jn 10:10) and definitely to communicate Himself, His own life, the life of the Father—"And his life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). Even if we do not deny the fact that Christ did indeed live these experiences to such an extent that our own intuitions seem but pale initiations of that life, we don't have to consider ourselves shallow-minded or sinners just so that Jesus might appear, by contrast, holy and divine: He would probably not have appreciated this attriude. We have, time and again, repeated His words: "I have said, you are Gods" (Ps 82:6; Jn 10:34). Why should we not feel authorized to speak as Gods? Personal dignity implies this: not only are we one of many rings in a chain of beings (or even of Being), but each one of us is also unique, unsubstitutable precisely because each one of us bears infinite divine value.

None of these experiences is either extraneous or inaccessible to us. We truly understand what Christ was talking about. What we said at the beginning may not appear more plausible to us. And there is more: If we cannot be sure that the man of Galilea actually did assert this or that phrase, we ourselves nevertheless do feel these experiences in our own hearts. Jesus's message pervades our lives and reveals the supreme experience of the human being. I would now like to quote St. Thomas Aquinas, who is not a sentimental writer: "If Jesus Christ had entrusted his teaching to the written word, people would have imagined that nothing else existed in his teaching other than what was contained in the Scriptures." <sup>82</sup>

Inasmuch as I am attempting to describe my experience, I must search in my own heart even as I refer to the Scriptures. It is again St. Thomas who tells us that the so-called law of the New Testament is not a written law but, rather, one that is

<sup>61</sup> I discern a homeomorphic equivalent of this mahāyāna intuition that connects nirvāṇa to saṇxāna. Those who truly experience saṇxāna discover nirvāṇa (Nāgārjuna, Madāyamika-kārixā XXV.19-20). "On earth as it is in heaven," as the Our Father declares in simple language and the hermetic tradition confirms.

a. "Stautem Christus scripto suam doctrinam mandaret, nibil alius de tius doctrina homines extistimaent quam quod scriptum contineree" (Il-Jesus Christ had entrusted His teaching to the written word, people would have imagined that nothing else existed in His teaching except what was contained in the Scriptures [Sum. theal II-II, q. 42, a. 4]). Thomas reminds us of such extra as p 12:125 and 2C o. 3:3, and cites Pythagorsa and Socrates as excellentisismi datates; who did the same thing. We may add Buddha, Mahàvīra, and others. Nor did Lao. The wish to write anything, and the African wise ones, too, do not write but only speak.

inscribed in our hearts: "The law of the New Testament is inscribed in our heart" (Sum. theal. 1-II, q-106, a.1). Again, when he writes that "the new law is the very grace of the Holy Spirit;" St. Thomas is reflecting the whole tradition, while also citing Scripture (Heb 8:8; Rom 3:27; 7:2).<sup>65</sup>

I must cherefore listen to my heart when it is pure and discover therein the Holy Spirit: of course, such listening is one casy to achieve. The holy Job was rold, "Listen to me: be silent and I shall teach you wisdom" (Jb 33:33). Though not impossible, such a purification of the heart is difficult; it must be practiced continuously. To listent and remain silent so as to learn how to "read" in one's own heart: then it is that we realize we cannot make it on our own. We need others. It is precisely this situation that constitutes the mystery of the human community, the communion (KOYUWY(IQ) of the mystical body.

Meditation on Christ's "emptying" throughout the whole life He lived without prileges, as a simple "son of man," leads to all the previous ideas. I am thinking of kendis;.6" Ihn notion is fundamental for a true meeting with many Asian religions, especially Buddhism, as is just now being discovered.60 In any event, the death of the I, the anonadamiento of Spanish mysticism, constitutes an indispensable condition, as virtually all mystical currents maintain. "In Christ, a new creature" (2 CO 5:17).

Let us repeat: None of this denies the fact that this supreme human experience—the experience of a being who is an empty container yearning to be filled with infinity—may be expressed in different ways by other traditions. Are we not, after all, saying that Jesus Christ is the revelation of the infinite hidden mystery, and so present in the cosmos from eternity (Rom 16:25–26)?

Even though far from being the eucharistic bread of life for others—and very slow to realize that those who enter in contact with me enter in communica-

O' Thomas himself quotes Augustine: "Strat Lex factorum scripta fuit in tabulis lapideis... ital ex fidei scripta est in cordibus [fidelium]" (Just as the law of [human] actions is written in stone.... so the law of faith was written in the hearts [of believers] [De spiritu et litten XXIV.41; PL 44.225]). It is interesting to observe that Thomas omits a few words of this teation and adds the word fidelium. Again: "Quae [Quid] sunt [ergo] lege dei ab pipo Deo scriptae in cordibus, nisi pipa praesentia Spiritus Sanni?" (What then are God's laws that God Himself has inscribed on hearts but the very presence of the Holy Spirit? [XXI.36]). The atmosphere of these citations is far from any kind of legalism.

<sup>64</sup> It is enlightening to observe different translations of Ph 2:7: Emptied himself (NRSV, NAB, NJB); made himself nothing (NEB, Revised English Bible); "entäuiserte sibf," selber [Fetusalemer Bible); "entäuiserte sibf," selber [Given]; "sind it uli-mième" [BJ])," se ano-nado" (NacarColungs); "sinorrea" (Montsetrat); "es va fer no rea" (Catalan Interconfessional Bible); "es depullià del seu rang" (Mateos/Rius Camps); "spogliò se stesso" (Italian Conference of Bishoos).

<sup>68</sup> As an example of this interest I cite a few studies of the Kyoto school: Nishitani (1982); Union (1989); Ohashi (1990); and in the same spirit Mitchell (1991); Lefebure (1993); and the recent writings of Massa Abe.

tion and communion with the source of life itself, which gives Life to me and everyone else, or even though I am so opaque that not all who see me see the Father, I still cannot deny that all these experiences belong to me too and are therefore available to every human being. Might not this be precisely what constitutes? the good news?

"I and the Father are one." We have already eliminated the fear of pantheism by acknowledging that the difference between the Father and us is infinite—as it is among the "persons" of the Trinity. Our being one with God—our drivine aspect, as Christian tradition loves to say—entails neither an indiscriminate fusion nor separation. Insofar as we are one with Christ, we are one with the Father. Although I am not the Source, the Source is neither separated nor separable from me. "The toil has not ended: this is time: the temporal "distention" of the cosmos's adventure (1 Cor 15:20-28). Since we cannot, now, engage in an exegesis of the text, we should be that or the sum of the cosmos's adventure (1 Cor 15:20-28). Since we cannot, now, engage in an exegesis of the text, we should be that or the sum of the cosmos's adventure.

When I refuse to be called "a human being," or when I criticize evolutionistic thought, when I claim to be unique and, to that extent, unclassifiable, I am
reacting against the invasion of the scientific mentality, which tends to obscure
one of the most central of all human experiences: being a unique divine icon of
reality, constitutively united with the Source of everything, a microcosm that
mirrors the entire macrocosm. In a word, I am one with the Father, infinite,
beyond all comparison and never interchangeable. The I is not me. I am not the
product of evolution, a speck of dust, or even mind in the midst of an immense
universe. Man, the integrally concrete, real man, is not an item in a classification
scheme: it is he who does the classifying. This holds for each one of us. I would
like to stress that Man's dignity lies precisely in His being conscious of the fact
that He and the Father are one. That is precisely what the Mediator dared to say,
anthròps Christos l'ésous (1 Tim 2:5). The abambrahmāsmi must be seen in the
light of the lat tuma si!

Herein lies the plenitude of Man. In the Vulgate, Psalm 25:16 is numbered 24:16 and reads, "Repite in me at miserer meit; quia unitcus et pauper ego sum" (Look at me and have pity on me because I am unique and poor). Note, that unicus is translated as "alone" in the New Revised Standard Version, and "lonely" in the New American Bible. The Septuagint translates μονογενής as unicus and πτωχός as pauper; the Hebrew employs terms that correspond to "solitary" and "disgraced," which are more in accord with such contemporary translations as, for example, the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>66</sup> After the death of his teacher Nithida, Nishitani wrote in his untranslatable Japanese calligraphy, "Although the source may be exhausted, its water can never be." He was remembering that "to kill the Buddha and the Masters exhibits the highest form of gratitude" (Ohashi [1990], 5). Here we see an example of a different way of thinking. I abstain from any kind of Thintarian comment in the light of the constant dynamism of peritabristis.

We must now resume our discussion of the ādbyātmie anthropology. After the philological and onrogenetic questions that characterize the primal ecstatic consciousness of humanity—"What are things, other people, and God?"—arises the principal existential question, "Who am 1?" I "am" between being and nothingness. Between these two extremes oscillates the story of human consciousness—as the Hebrew pashms cry out.

Who am 1? Jesus, like every other man, raised the question. He was concerned to know what others said about Him, yet the answers He received did not seem to hat convinced Him much—except for one that did not come from human lips: "You are my son." This answer, which Jesus heard at the Jordan and again at Tabor, which Peter confessed, the centurion confirmed, the Pharisees denied, and the disciples debated, seems to represent Jesus's central experience: I am not an autonomous I (I only say what I hear—my words are not mine); I am not an I but a thou of the I, the thou of God. Neither autonomy (I am not an individual who exists in himself) nor heteronomy (nor am I a mere instrument that an "Other" or others manipulate). Rather, it is a matter of outonomy (I am joined to Reality, to the Father, in a real relationship of inter-independence).

Strengthened by his experience (that of Jesus), we too can seek to live it with greater trust. We are neither God nor non-God, neither real nor nonneal, neither angels nor devils. Sad-assad-anivacamiya (something ineffable, that is neither being nor nonbeing), says the vedānta. Within this historico-religious context, we could perhaps describe Jesus's experience as the answer available to every person. Although perhaps 1d on not know 'who I am', as the Re-veda I 1d-43.79 says, I surely do know one thing, "I am never completely identical with myself." The subject of the question cannot be identified totally with the predicate of the answer. "How can one see the seen?" St. Augustrien asked himself—Quomodo potest videre videntem?"—thereby reflecting the Upanishadic problematic. But in order to discover ourselves as a thou, a tuam (tat tuam ait), it is necessary that someone, the I, tell us this, and in addition we must be prepared to listen. The Father's 'you are my sons' corresponds to Jesus's Abba, Patri!

To become God's children, we must nor dehumanize ourselves through a negative saceticism that entails the abandonment of the body and matter, as many forms of Neoplatonic, Vedantic, and other forms of spirituality suggest. The Christian theõisi resides not in the "flight of the solitary to the Solitary" but in the full realization of the verbum care factum est ("the Word became flesh" of the Creed)—that is, the realization of the incarnation.

### It Is Good That I Leave

Our third mahāvākya represents the deepest stage of spiritual experience, for many reasons, but especially because it is the most human. The kenōsis is an act that

<sup>67</sup> See Panikkar (1966), 255-56.

continues. The theösis (divinization of Man) without the kenösis (divine annihilation) would constitute a diabolical temptation (Gn 3:5). The Trinity is the fulcrum of Christian experience. The Christ represents both the divinization of Man and the humanization of God. If Christ were God alone or "more" divine than human, His life and "mysteries" could not also represent our destiny; His karma would not be human.

That "meditation on death," which Plato calls  $\mu\epsilon\lambda\dot{\epsilon}\tau\eta$   $\theta\alpha\nu\dot{\epsilon}\tau\tau0$  (meleté thanatou [Phated 81a]), represents a comment that is profound in its simplicity. Since ancient times, both in the East and the West, such a meditation has been the counsel that the wise have offered in order to achieve a wise life.

What we have said does not entail any pessimism, since everything falls and dies, and our bodies age and become decomposed. All this should inspire neither anxiety in the face of death nor a more or less morbid desire to die-nor excessive speculation about life after life. It is simply a matter of acknowledging reality and respecting what is, as Jesus taught when He said it is good that stones remain stones (in the temptation narratives of Mt 4:3-4; Lk 4:4). What we would be wise to acknowledge is this. Not that I must disappear, not that others are waiting for me elsewhere, not that I am in a rush to leave this earth, nor that I should attach myself to those who have lived with me. Instead, what I must recognize is that our time must arrive, one moment or another, and it is right that it be so because temporal ex-istence must be reborn, must enter into tempiternal sistence in the Spirit's manere. When His disciples ask Jesus to remain and then recognize Him, He immediately disappears (Lk 24:29-31). "Life does not die," as a Vedic text says (CUVI.11.3), "Vita mutatur, non tollitur," the ancient Christian liturgy chants-Life changes, it is not taken away.68 It is good that time does not stop in us-nor we in time.

#### The Texts

'Αλλ' ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν, συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω, ὁ παράκλητος οὺ μὴ ἔλθη οὑκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ, πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.<sup>69</sup>

Sed ego veritatem dico vobis: expedit vobis ut ego vadam. Si ego non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos; si autem abiero, mittam eum ad vos.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> According to Thomas Aquinas, "Dicitur autem creatura fluvius quia fluit semper de esse ad non-esse per corruptionem, et de non-esse ad esse per generationem" (Created being is called a river because it always flows from being to non-being through corruption and from non-being to being through generation). See Sermones festivi, 61.

<sup>69</sup> In the Greek manuscripts there are some variants that are not substantive.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away because, unless I do, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.  $^{70}$ 

In 16:7

I will not dwell on the scene, even though it is very moving and could have been created a posteriori. We are dealing, nevertheless, with a universal human situation: the future does not seem bright. His followers will be presecuted, and the state of mind that has entered into His disciples may be described in this way: the Master is about to leave them at any moment without having finished hardly anything while, at the same time, almost abandoning them. We can understand Judas's frustration and desperation: Jesus's mission is about to end in a total fiasco.

The people have abandoned Him because it has become too risky to follow Him; the synagogue declares Him a heretic, indeed blasphemous; the political representatives despise Him; and His "own" do not understand Him. He has not left them anything durable, no institution; He has neither baptized nor ordained, much less has He founded anything—though He may have manifested the intention of doing so. He has left both the Spirit and Himself as a silent Presence in the eucharistic act. He has sent them as a lamb among wolves and refuses to change tactics even at the end: wolves are still roaming about. He promises His followers only one thing: the Spirit.

This is not the place to examine in depth the meaning of the verb sympherein, which is translated as "it is good" or "to your advantage," and which literally means, "to put together," "to gather." In this scenario the verb means something profitable, advantageous, opportune, in harmony with the entire situation.

His life is about to reach its end and He is certainly about to go to the Father (Jn 14:12; 16:17, 28; 20:17; and elsewhere). In any event, He is about to go, despite the fact that Fle has just reached the fullness of His age. While He consoles His disciples by saying that He has not left them orphans (Jn 14:18), He also makes them understand that they will not see Him again. And the specter of His imminent death weighs constantly on them. He promises them consolation, comfort, an intercessor, a mediator, an advocate, an aid, a Paraclete. In other texts the advocate is described

Nagain, other translations are interesting: "whereas if I go, I will send him to you" (NEB): "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I do no go away, the Advocate will not come to you" (AV): "It is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you" (Confratenitey/Challoner/Rheims): "It vaut mieux pour vous que partec; ear it is ne pars pas, le Paraclet ne wiendan pas à vous" (Bi): "Es it qui fliv euch, das ich forigehe. Denn wenn ich nicht forigehe, wird der Beitstand nich zu euch kommen" (Neuer Jerusalemer Bibel): "Us convel que me'n vagi; perquè is no me'n vaig no vindri el vostre valedor a vosaltres" (Matecos/Rius Camps): "Us comvé que me'n vagi; perquè is no me'n naig no vindri el vostre Defensor a vosaltres" (Catalan Interconfessional Bible): "Os conviene que yo me uva. Perque is no me fuere el dobgoade no vendra i vosarios" (Neaec-Golungs).

as the Spirit and often called "the Spirit of truth" (e.g., Jn 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13), a reflection perhaps of the language of the Qumran community.<sup>71</sup>

Όταν δὲ ἔλθη ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν.

Cum autem venerit ille, Spiritus veritatis deducet vos, in omnem veritatem.

When, however, the Spirit of truth will come, he will guide you to the whole truth.

Jn 16:13

The ext could not be any more explicit. As soon as He leaves, the Spirit of truth will come and introduce us to the truth in its entirety. B it a matter of the ingenuous faith or blind trust in the Spirit? It is presumed that Jesus also said that it is the Spirit that gives life: Spiritus est qui vivificat (Jn 6:63), although some exegetes tend to contextualize this phrase in eucharistic discussions.

The Spirit is a Spirit of truth, that truth that makes us free (Jn 8:32; 2 Co 3:17). Although this Spirit will not carry us toward precise formulations or fragments of truth, it will carry us toward truth in its entirety, toward indivisible truth, toward the discovery ( $\dot{\alpha}\lambda\dot{\eta}\theta$ et $\dot{\alpha}$  alëtheia) of the recondite nugget of truth.<sup>72</sup> Consecrate them in the truth" (Jn 17:17). The Spirit does not make us omniscient but true seekers; it does not lead us to know everything but to be everything—the totum in parte (the whole in the part), the icon of reality.

Let us remember that the truth Jesus is talking about is not the correspondence (adaequatio) between an abstract intellect and an idea; it is rather an aequatio ad (from aequitas, "equality"), a sort of "equality toward" the order of reality (rta, dharma; vctxc [taxis], ordo).

As we have already said, the way of truth is one and the same as the search for justice—and vice versa. To separate the truth, the truth that makes us free, from its incarnation in life—that is, from justice—represents the rupture of human life into a theoretico-conceptual and a practico-temporal world, a rupture that bears mortal consequences. The justice of the Gospel, the dikaiosynē (δικατοσύνη) is indissoluble

<sup>71</sup> The Manual of Discipline of the Qunran community bestows upon the "spirit of truth" the function of "illuminating man's heart, setting it on the path of virtue... bestowing understanding and intelligence... a spirit of discernment" (1QS IV:2-6).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> The Gospel of Truth discovered at Nag Hammadi and marked by Valentinian tendencies says in chapter IV. "Jesus Christ, by means of a hidden mystery, has illuminated those who are in the dark. By drawing them out of oblivion, he has illuminated and shown them a path. This path is the Truth, and it is precisely the Truth that he raught them." Cited in Orbe (1985), 124.

insofar as it binds human justice and divine justification. A Christophany for our age cannot accept this dichotomy—as liberation theology is trying to tell us.

There is much more. Although truth can perhaps be translated into concepts, it itself is not a concept any more than orthodoxy is a doctrine. As I noted in the dedication, truth itself is "journeying," like a pilgrim. Such a description would make no sense, however, and we would fall into an anarchical relativism, if truth were identified with a conceptual system. Not only is truth a relation; it is also a personal relation. It is not truth that is adored; it is true adorers who adore the divine mystery in spirit and truth [Jn 4:24]. Truth is one and the same as the spirit of truth.

Ό πιστεύων είς ἐμὲ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ κὰκαῖνος ποιήσει καὶ μείζονα τούτων ποιήσει, ὅτι ἐγὼ προς τὸν πατέρα πορεύομαι.

Qui credit in me, opera, quae ego facio, et ipse faciet, et maiora horum faciet, quia ego ad Patrem vado.

He who believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do even greater ones because I am going to the Father.<sup>73</sup>

Jn 14:12

Let us recall those traditional theological distinctions that prevent us from thinking that the disciple is capable of surpassing the teacher, even though this text seems to assert that such a possibility exists. In any event, the assertion does suggest that we are only at the beginning of a new manifestation of the Spirit and that our task is to continue it in a creative and even more admirable way.

It seems important to note the causal connection of the phrase: we shall do greater that go because He is going to the Father. He does not leave us "orphans"—without a Father (Jn 14:18). He is the mediator (updor inc; mestic fi 1 Tim 2:5]), not the intermediary (cf. John 14:20). The mediator has accomplished what He had to do (Jn 17:4). Now it is up to us. But the bond remains: He returns to the Source from which we too can drink the living water (Jn 4:14) that is clearly bound up with the Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).

<sup>33</sup> Several other translations follow: "He who has faith in me will do what I am doing: and he will do greater things still because I am going to the Father" (NEB); "Whoever believe more shower works, because I am going to the Father" (NJB); "Wer an mich glaubt, der wird die Werke, die ich tue, aber selber tun. Ja, grössere als die wird er tun, well ich zum Yater gehe" (Stice); "Chi crede in me, compiend le opere che io compio e ne fand di più grandi, perche io undo al Padre" (Episcopal Conference of Italy).

#### The Interpretation

"It is good that I am leaving you" possesse a profound Christological meaning. It removes the tempration to any kind of pan-Christism or even Christocentrism. Jesus knew that it was good that He leave, that He had not come to remain but to remain in us in the most perfect form, not as a more or less welcome guest foreign to us but in our very being. This is the meaning of the Eucharist. This is the work of the Spirit.

"It is good that He is leaving us." Otherwise we would make Him king—that is, an idol—or we would rigidify Him into concepts, into intellectual containers. We would turn His teaching into a system, imprison Him within our own categories, and suffocate the Spirit.

"It is good that He is leaving you," as He did at Emmaus, at the mountain of Galilee, or as He did when they wanted to kill Him or make Him king. The warning is worth repeating: "O men of little faith! Have you not yet understood that the kingdom of God is neither here nor there, that it cannot be objectified, that all our notions of it are provisional, in constant movemens, and rather conventional?"

Christophany illuminates every being. Neither a manifestation of another nor a human alienation, it is rather the maximal actualization of our true identity. The phrase of the African slave who had become free may also be said of Christ: "Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto" (I am a man; I consider nothing human foreign to me).<sup>73</sup>

This humanum is humanity, "the perfect Man." It is therefore not a question of reducing everything to the one sole center, which would be Jeaus the Christ. Reality exhibits as many different centers as there are centers of consciousness—which means that it manifests as many centers as there are beings. This is not, therefore, any kind of pan-Christism because Christ has left and thereby allowed the Spirit to bestow our identity on us. In a certain sense this last mahātaātya sums up the quintessence of Jesus's message: no certitude, no assurance, no external rule, total faith in us, in each of us. The Spirit will come.

Not only does He go, not only does He in fact leave us, not only does He trust us and give us responsibility, but it is good that it be so. All this should remind us of Lao Tze and Chuang-tzu.

There is a strong temptation to criticize organizations and emphasize the betrayal of many Christians and, above all, of the official churches for having wanted to rigidify everything, regulate life, and proclaim laws. We are, of course, justified in sustaining a critical and open spirit and in not fearing to denounce what appear to us as abuses

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Terentius, Heautontimoroumeno 77 (circa AD 163). The phrase became very widely known because Cierco (De Officiis 19.30; De legibus 1.12.33), Seneca (Ad Lucilium XCV-53); Juvenal (Saities XV.140ff.), and Ambrose (De officiis III.7.45) quoted it.

<sup>75</sup> Here we have an example of the meaning of a phrase that tradition has gradually deepened over the centuries.

and deformations of Christ's spirit. But let us not forget that it is good that He has gone, and good that we realize it was not necessary for Him to remain, just as it was not necessary for an omnipotent God (to give one example, without pursuing the argument) to prevent us from abusing our freedom. It is good for the church to be in human hands, that humanity forge it sown destiny, and that we become co-responsible for the world's dynamism (Qo 3:11). "And he left the world to their disputations," we read in the Latin version of a biblical text," even though it does not correspond to the original. The immutability that breaks life's dynamism is death.

This trust in the Spirit, which in reality means trust in Man, this freedom is the teamment of that "prophet powerful in deeds and words" (Lk 24:19). "Where there is Spirit there is freedom" (2 Co 3:17), Ubi Spiritus, ibi libertas!

The traditional interpretation of Jesus's "last discourse" (Jn 13–17) is well known. Jesus seems to be aware of both His mission and His responsibilities. This discourse alludes to the Trinity and the church and contains an undeniable example of the climate in which the first generations of Christians lived. Without these chapters, it would be difficult to understand them.<sup>77</sup>

Modern scholarship has accomplished marvels in filtering strata of texts and in analyzing the historical events that gave rise to the text being examined. Yet it is undeniable that, in one sense or another, the promise of the Spirit belongs to Jesus's kerygma.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the first Christian generations to believe that the Son of God decided to found His church and was conscious of a role entrusted to them by the divine Father may have held the discourse reported in the Gospels, which can be understood as the apex of the teaching of Jesus. It is undeniable, however, that the attitude it reflects its typical of the man of Galliee. Here we can see that, instead of visualizing a triumphalistic "representation" toward the works of Christian communities in which Jesus seems to have had no doubts about His church, it is surely possible to interpret His words a narrating a realistic situation that crushes every idealistic expectation.

We could say that Jesus failed and lost the opportunity to found His church. The enthusiastic crowd wanted to make Him king: He walked away. The apostles wanted Him to remain on the mountain: He rebuked them and went down to the plain. Saran wanted to offer Him all the kingdoms of the world: He refused. He did not even want to listen to the Scriptures and convert the stones into bread for Himself: He preferred that the stones remain stones. He was certainly not a diplomat capable of ingratiating Himself with those in power. But in this last situation He could no longer leave. They seized Him and got rid of Him: He died abandoned.

<sup>76</sup> Et mundum tradidit disputationi eorum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> The following is found in a classical Italian commentary by St. Catherine of Siena (1935), 845: "I shall go and return to you, for when the Holy Spirit returned to His disciples, He did not return alone but came with my power, the Son's wisdom (which is one and the same with me) and the clemency of the same Holy Spirit, who proceeds from me, the Father, and the Son."

<sup>78</sup> Cf. González-Faus's expression (1995), 124: Extra Spiritum nulla salus.

We are not therefore commenting on a single statement and elaborating a specific exegesis. We are seeking to understand Jesus's experience and asking ourselves whether, ultimately, our experience corresponds to the fundamental actitude that we grasp in what He said and did. Jesus repeated that message constantly. He lived and preached it. "Do not be anxious" (µi µ µEp µµ võttè më merimate [Mt 6:25–34]) about the future, be serene, do not think about what vou should say (Mt 10:19).

It seems appropriate to append a teaching passage that reveals Jesus's humanity, It is not a question of an omniscient being who hopes to arouse repentance for Peter's betrayal—whoever it is who might have written the passage and whatever may be its historical level of reality. I refer, of course, to the question, "after eating!" "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than they love me?" (In 21:15–16). Even though He has risen, He must nevertheless go and implore love, human love. He may leave if He is reassured of being loved. He does not ask, "Simon of John, have you understood my message? Have you understood who I am?" We discern an autobiographical (and prophetic) tone even in the reported fact that Jesus was in no condition to eo where He would have liked and saw what He had dreamed of doing.

I leave everything to love—and neither to my will nor to projects of any type whatsoever. I must go, simply go, and I leave you with a question: Have I aroused love in you? I entrust my message to you—to you who, like Peter, are not sure of yourselves because of your many betravals. but you still do love me.

Jesus behaved truly as a servant, not as a pantokratör. Let us also note how the roles are overturned. Jesus neither asks Peter if he repents, nor does He say that He forgives him: He asks if he loves Him. It is then that he will be forgiven, for love alone cancels sin: "Her many sins are forgiven because she has loved much..." (Lk 7.47).?9 The text's ambivalence constitutes a vital, not a vicious circle. Love leads to forgiveness and forgivenes to Over. Listen to what the risen Christ says: "Receive the Holy Spirit: those whose sins you forgive will be forgiven" (Jn 20.22–23). We have the power to forgive, to cancel the offense only if we love—that is, if we have the Spirit, which is Love. It is the Spirit that enables us to forgive. By ourselves, even with the greatest good will, we cannot do so. But in going away, it is the Spirit that He leaves us.

It is not by chance that we have presented this māhāvakya last. One of our reasons for doing so resides in the central dogma of Jesus's life—the resurrection. Unless Jesus leaves, the Spirit will not come, and His resurrection will not acquire its full meaning. "Men of Galilee, why are you looking at the heavens?" (Ac 1:11). In a paradoxical sense the text at issue constitutes a discourse on the resurrection. God's children are children for the resurrection (Lk 20:36), and the resurrection reveals the Tinitarian life in us. It is good that He leaves; in what other way could we find Him risen? The resurrection is the real presence of the absence. "He has risen. He is not here!"—neither here nor there, just like the kingdom (Lk 17:21).

<sup>79</sup> Significantly enough, only Luke reports these words.

The apostle said, "Praedica verbum" (Preach the word [2 Tim 4:2]), but Jesus went further: "Become the Word," let your self "continue" the incarnation, a process that does not end with me, for it is indeed in this me that you exist. This is the ultimate meaning of the Eucharist. As we have seen, loss of the mystical sense of reality has brought us to confuse the messenger with the message and reduce the latter to a doctrine if not to an outright ideology. The kerygma of this and many other texts consists not in making speeches but in incarnating a life in the selfsame glorious proclamation of Life in its belintude.

We have already seen how the Scholastic creatio continua liberates us from a fixed and conditioned universe. We must now mention still another experience that is difficult to communicate because both words and thoughts fail, as one Upanishad asserts. This experience, which could be expressed as an incarnatio continua, liberates us from living in a merely historical and temporal universe and makes us conscious of our divine dignity. The Christian incarnation is not an accident, not something that happens by chance in human "nature."

This incarnation is in fact the Trinitarian vision of creation. The divine mystery makes itself flesh, makes itself matter, "creates" not ex se but certainly a se—since outside of God, there is nothing." (To "create" ex se would constitute pantheism; hence, in dialogue with Plato, we say ex nihilo—without a "prime matter.") We are not inquiring now whether Christ, the second Adam, assumes nature (in its entirety) or the nature of Man as an individual (in His singularity). We do say that the Word's incarnation in Jesus is the revelation of the mystery that has been hidden since "the eternal cone" (Rom 16:25), and that in Him we see the fullness of the "last times" (Heb 1:2) realized in the head of "creation" (Col 1:15–20). The destiny of the head is one and the same as the destiny of the members, and indeed of the whole universe (Rom 8:19–23).

Although this is not the place to present a "theology" of the Eucharist understood as incarnatio continua, we shall refer to it in the third part of this work as an example of the harmony and coherence of Christian intuitions. Too often the Eucharist has been reduced to a private devotion or a quasi-superstitious act or a disincarnate faith. Surely the church fathers intended to say something when they spoke to us of the Eucharist as "the medicine of immortality" ( $\phi$ ápµακον ἀθαναστίας pharmakon athanasias).

In this sense it seems no exaggeration to assert that this mahāvākya represents the acme of the experience of Jesus the Christ, more or less conscious of being "the splendor of God's glory and the imprint of God's being" (Heb 1:3). In fact, "leaving" on the part of Jesus is a symbol of the Tinitarian perithèrèsis, the revelation of the

<sup>\*\* &</sup>quot;When both word and mind fail because of their inability to teach it (brahman), those who in this fashion know the joy of brahman no longer experience any fear" (TU II.9; II.4.1).

<sup>81</sup> See Panikkar (1966), "Creazione in metafisica indiana," 71–98, esp. 82–83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Ad Ephesios XX.2.2 (PG 5.661). See my 1952 article "La Eucaristia y la Resurrección de la carne," in Panikkar (1963), 335-52.

THE Expressions 229

divine—that is, Trinitarian—life in the whole of that reality I have called theanthropocosmic or cosmotheandric, in order to join the Christian tradition, which extends the expression of the divine glory (Ps 19-2) to the whole cosmos.

There are not two universes, one divine and the other material. Secation does not exist outside God (extra Deum). Rather, it is a moment, a dimension of the radical Trinity. The Trinitarian life circulates through the whole universe. "The Father has created everything; everything was in him, and everything desires to know him."

Let us resume our inquiry regarding the profound "reason" for Christ's words. a ricessary that He leave so that the dynamism of Life will not be reduced to an arid dualism. This is the nonduality of which St. Thomas writes explicitly: "Unum idemque actu quo Deus generat Filium creat et mundum" (By the same act through which God generates the Son He creates the world). <sup>53</sup> This sentence expresses the Trinitarian dynamism that is usually defined improperly in an external sense as ad extra.

The Christian tradition has seen in Christ the "mediator" (µɛoītm; meaitē), the one who comes from the Father and goes to the Spirit without separating Himself from them: the true way that leads to Life. But this mediator is undivided.\* God's life is Trinitarian. For us life comes and goes and does not stop; we exist within this dynamism and live in its passing. Expressed in grammatical terms, Being is a verb, an action, an actus in Scholastic language, an activity, èvépyetu, energeia—not a substance. It is good that He leaves, and it is also good that we too leave. He represents the model. Life is a gift, a gift that has been given to us and that we in turn give back; in this fashion we participate in the Father's activity—otherwise we would not be One. "The one who loves bis life will lose it" (Jn 12:25), because, as the Buddha would say, this life is transitory.

### The Experience

The question we pose now is whether we can understand this statement without either minimizing or diluting it, as well as without transferring Jesus's words into declarations of a sovereign human consciousness. As a normal human being, I ask myself how I can understand what transpires in a human heart that pronounces these words. Do we not call Him our brother and friend, as He has told us? Allow me, then, once again to speak in the first person.

<sup>83</sup> See Sherrard (1992), esp. 157ff. "The visible universe is God's living body; it is the temple of the living God" (163). This idea is present in many religions which, without falling into pantheism, see God's body in the world.

<sup>84</sup> The Gospel of Truth, in Vannucci (1978), 326.

<sup>85</sup> Sum. theol. I, q.34, a.3.

McCording to Aquinas, "In filio est esse Paternitatis quia in divinis non est nisi unum esse" (The being of Father is in the Son because in divine things there is but one being [In IV Sententias I, 433, 41, 41, 4d 2]).

I must go; otherwise the Spirit will not come. I must not be intent on perpetuating my life because, if I do, Life will be neither continued nor transmitted to others. Everything that I have been, I have experienced, lived and seen, yet it will remain fruitless if I carry it with me into the tomb. I am not the exclusive master of my life, of that Life which has been granted me. If I cling, Life will not flow, will not live. Life has been given us, Rabindranath Tagore has written, and it is only in giving it that we merit it. We have already mentioned John's phrase (12:25), which the other evangelists echo (Mr I0:39; 16:25; Lk 9:24: 17:33; Mk 8:35), and which, expressed in different words, tells us that we, that I, must not cling to my "life" but, rather, consecrate it to something larger than my ego. It is well that I leave, that we leave. As I go, I leave many of my projects unfinished, many of my aspirations unsarisfied. The longer I live, the more surely I discover what it is that I could have done.

I must not yearn to make myself immortal or worry whether my projects and ideals will be followed to the letter and observed according to my desires. In life we find dynamism, in reality that Spirit of truth that flows from me, too, if only I do not enclose myself within myself. This Spirit will pervade others by its own initiative, without any need for me to program myself first. This is what freedom is. "Where the Spirit is there is freedom" (2 Co 3:17). Freedom is the fruit of truth (Jn 8:32).

Jesus's experience manifests a truly liberated soul, and what this implies is clear: Jesus achieved a total transparency and transcended both the burden of the past and the fear of the future.

Have we not learned that alchough Lao Tze, Socrates, Sankara, Kant, Gandhi, our ancestors (to give but a few disparate examples) have all gone, their spirit surely has not? To be a man is to be unique for a certain period of time—and then pass the flame to others. Although we all know that we shall leave, a certain wisdom is required to learn that it is good that it be so. Eternity is neither a long nor a definite time. Eternal life is no continuation of living in the future: it is, rather, the infinite life lived in the experience (and also hope) of the "tempierenity." The individual drop that we are disappears in time although the personal water that we are (the drop's water) lives eternally—if, that is, we have succeeded in realizing the (divine) water that we are. \*\*

The first mahāvākya is in a certain sense turned toward the past: the Father exists "before" us, is more powerful than we are: He is the Source. The second statement

F There is a fundamental difference (at least in the Greek text) between the words ξωή and βίος (εδê and bios). The meaning of the first is simply "life," while the second refers to one's individual life. Jeaus did not promise bios eternal, an individual continuing life, but infinite εδê. Christ is the bread of life, the bread of εδê, not bios. See Kerenyi (1976), xxxi-xxxii. for this distinction in the Greek wold.

<sup>88</sup> Panikkar (1980).

THE EXPRESSIONS 231

somehow concerns the present: we are the same in nature and surely are not two. Our bond gives us life and, in fact, constitutes our very existence. The third expression is directed toward the future and toward overcoming its grip on us.

I must go, I shall surely go, yet I am not sad. I do not burn with a desire for "immorrality" as if it were a prolongation of my sheer existence; I do not even yearn for a continuation of my ideals, thoughts, plans, and projects. Those who love "to the utmost" (Jn 13:1) believe in those whom they love. I do not wish to freeze the flow of Life that springs from the Father and will continue to flow. I share this life, I participate in this adventure, I do not need any heavy baggage. Consummatum est! The Spriit will come even though it is not I who will send it, even though I have no power over Him and indeed I feel it is not I who sends Him. He will come. "The Spriit and the Bride say. "Come" (Rev 22:17)." And we who listen repeat, "Come!"

This surely does not mean that I should retire before my time, escape my destiny, refuse to follow my dharma, not accept my karma. I am ready to leave when my time arrives, but not because I am tired of life. We always face the risk of being misinterpreted. The fact that the exact time for us to leave is uncertain seems to me a great lesson of Life, and above all for our contemporary generations, tormented as they are by a desire for certainty and the obsession with security.

This uncertainty, this not knowing whether there will be a tomorrow for me, allows me to live the today in all its intensity, as if it were the last and definitive moment. I can then redeem the time (see Ep 5:16; Col 4:5) and discover the tempiternity in every moment. Every act is unique and unrepeatable. Every day contains life in its entirety (Mr 6:34). In this way I live, not in the repetition of mechanical acts but in a continuous creation. Nor can I forget that I will take my last step only after the next to the last. It is surely appropriate that every step be unique—and that at a certain moment I will be leaving.

It may well be, of course, that I am not capable of always living at the height of this intuition, although I cannot deny that I do know it (in an experiential sense) when I live a truly authentic life, free of every ego. I then find a force in myself that is free of the ego, a power (exousia) that sends the Spirit into the world: it is the Spirit with which I succeed in identifying myself when my heart is pure.

And there is more. Unless I leave, the Paraclete will not come.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> It is both significant and moving to read the text in Revelation as the motto for Sergei Bulgakov's 1933 Lambo of God, "a book about Christ's and our theanthropy." It begins with the statement, "The salvation that Christ worked within man's soul, which is more precious than the world" (Bulgakov [Boulgakov] 1982, ix).

Let us not examine now what is described as the "one called to our side," the "consoler," "intercessor," the "invoked," the "implored." Everything may be summed up in the traditional word "Spirit."

If I cling to life, to my ego, to my mission, to my task, to my ideal, or, even worse, to my goods, to my family, to people, to the world; if I do not let everything go, if I do not re neounce every desire to prolong my life (even though I call it immortality) and insist rather on constructing monuments to my creation and aspire to control all that has cost me so much toil to produce so that it might not all get lost, Life will be suffocated. It is not for the future but for the present that I must order my life. I am but transient or, better, a participant in the perichôrēsis, the dance of the entire universe, the constant rhythm of everything, of the Trinitarian or cosmotheandric unfolding of reality.

I understand the extraordinary experience of Jesus: to be free of thoughts, to overcome the anxiety for the future, learn from the flowers that blossom today and tomorrow will have withered, renounce every fantasizing about the future by living a life always projected toward the future, thereby allowing the tempiterand moments of our human existence to escape us.

It is only then, with neither fear of death nor attachment to existence that we achieve the full freedom to pursue justice at all levels, from "justification" [by faith] to political justice. We then experience the fact that the search for "the kingdom of God" is inseparable from "his justice" (Mt 6:33). This kingdom is within us—among us; it is not the kingdom of an individualistic me. This is the reason why I do not feel the tragedy of failure, even if the large charitor of "external history" does not seem to travel the right road. It is true that you, Jesus, have suffered abandonment but not despair.

I can well understand that the man of Nazareth experienced sadness but not anxiety, sorrow but not despair. I understand, too, that He experienced a profound serenity nor devoid of joy as He felt that it was good for Him to leave: He had lived—and lived life in its plenitude. Others might well produce works even greater than His—if they entrust themselves to the Spirit, which lives in each one of us.

Jeshua [Jehoshua] ha nözeri, Jesus of Nazareth, is about to leave us, all of us are about to leave. He neither lays foundations for anything nor does He initiat any religion. He does not play the role of a teacher, a title that He does not like. His time has arrived, and He leaves after accomplishing His mission, which was not, it seems—and this we must acknowledge—a great success. His sole testament is His Spirit, which means that His followers have a perfect right to establish a church, create rites, and continue His work creatively—even at the risk of making mistakes. Theology is not archaeology. Faith does not deal with the past nor hope with the future: they both deal with the invisible (to the senses and mind, but not the intellect).

THE EXPRESSIONS 233

To assume my human condition, to become conscious that my time has ended and I must leave, to be convinced that the Spirit must be neither suffocated nor controlled nor directed, constitutes the supreme human experience. The Son of man does not want for Himself either exceptions or privileges.

This is the last test I will undergo. I must go. The ego will die and thus make room for the Spirit: this is Life and Resurrection.

The experience of the three mahāwākyāni is only one. They do not constitute three experiences, inasmuch as one is interwoven with the other. If they did live separately, they would be false and would then lead to dualism, monism, pantheism, or nothingness.

Even though we feel that "the Father is greater" as we live the experience of the Abba, Patèr!, we also feel "I and the Father are one." The Abba is no outside us. If for one moment the Father should cease to give us life, to "generate" us, it would not only be we who would perish, but He Himself, for He would no longer be the Father, that is to say, He who gives life. The source is within us. We are the One, we are the thou that the "I" originates. Expressed in somewhat paradoxical form, the Father gives Himself life by giving that same life to us. It is because of us that He is Father, that He is Life.

In addition, the discovery of the One, which comes after seeing the Father, leads to the discovery of the Whole. The Father is not the property of any one person alone. He is the Father because He gives Life to everything, and inasmuch as I am one with Him, "I" too am everything. In other words, when the Christian discovers Christ in Himself, when he lives the immanence to which he has been invited, he does not discover Jesus (Jesus is the mediator) but he does see the Father ("Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father"), and becoming God, becomes everything. This kind of knowledge may be described as assimilation without loss of personal differentiation. What we are witnessing here is the mystery of the Spirit."

Within the innermost depths of experience, the I is grasped as microcosm. Each of us is not a world in itself, as if a variety of little worlds existed. Each one of us is the unique world in our totality, although miniaturized. And so the Christian tradition has completed the Greek intuition by saying that Man is also a mikrotheos, a micro-God, not a small God alongside the great God but God, the very Godself.

<sup>90</sup> See the reflections of St. Thomas in Sum. theol. I. q.37, a.2, ad 3: "Pater non solum Filium, sed etiam se et not diligit Spirius Sants. ... Unde sicun Pater dies et omnem creaturam Verbo quod genuit, inquantum Verbum genitum sufficienter repraesentat Patrem et omnem creaturam; ita diligit se et omnem creaturam Spiritus Sanctos, inquantum Spiritus Sanctus procedit ut amor bonitatis primae, secundum quant Pater amat se et omnem creaturam" (The Father loves not only the Son but He also loves Himself and us in the Holy Spirit. ... Just as the Father "speaks" Himself and every creature in the Word He has generated, inasmuch as that Word represents the Father and every creature, so does He love Himself and every creature in the Holy Spirit inasmuch as the Holy Spirit proceeds as the love of the primal goodness whereby the Father loves Himself and every creature.

Again, substantializing thought renders the phrase inaccessible, interpreting it atomistically. We are not small Gods.

The Spirit comes when I leave; and as I leave, I leave space for the dynamism of reality. The Father "leaves" into the Son, gives God's whole self and disappears as Father—or rather, disappears as Father if, by virtue of the Trinitarian perichôrèsis through the work of the Spirit, He did not become resurrected into fatherhood. In the same manner, the Son "leaves," and it is the Spirit that "renews" all things, or rather, brings it about that reality is an "absolute novelty" and not simply a "circular" renewal (Rev 21:5; 2 Co 5:17). But here all metaphors collapse.

Even the virtually universal experience of love that moved lbn 'Arabī to exclaim. "The lover, the beloved, the love," reveals one and the same experience. And it is precisely the experience of love that constitutes the key that allows us to enter into this mystery, into the gubā, the greatest secret, which is not, however, according to Abhinavagupta, a secret at all, nor is it hidden in any distant, arduous, esoretic place." Light in itself is darkness, cannot be seen, is invisible: in order to become luminous, it needs me, an opaque body. Without me, light would indeed be darkness, and without light I would be nothing.

Among the three māhvākyāmi there is a gradation. Only when all this is complete and an echo of divine transcendence in its immanence and when I dwell in this presence and that presence is the final cause of my being—and in some way conscious—only after the Abba, Patēr, can I say, "I and the Father are one." Only when the light flows like molten metal enveloping the chalk of my skeleton by penetrating all the cavities can I say, I have reached the original, the Christ. Only when my image is completed and my icon painted and consecrated can I reflect the Father. Then those who see me see God in the Spirit that envelops us. Likewise, it is only when this plenitude has been reached that I can say consummatum est and discover that it is good that I leave because the Spirit is coming—and continues to come.

<sup>91</sup> See Bäumer (1988), 53ff, (Sanskrit text, 18).

# THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus says to the disciples: "Compare me, and tell me whom or what I am like." Simon Peter answered him: "Moster, you are like a great angel." Matthew answered him: "Master, you are like a great philosopher." Thomas said to him. "Master, my tongue is absolutely incapable of saying whom you are like." Jesus said to him: "I am not your master because you have drunk and you have been inebriated at the bubbling spring that I have measured." Then he took him aside and spoke three words. And when Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him: "What has Jesus told you?" Thomas answered, "If I tell you just one word that he has spoken to me, you would take up stones and throw them at me, fire would come out of the stones and would burn you."

Coptic Gospel of Thomas 13

#### Eva Me Suttam

"This I have heard," as many Buddhist Scriptures say, or also ἤκουσα (ēkousa), as Socrates said (Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c).

Once there was a man who came to the world and asserted that He was one with the Origin of the universe, although in fact He was not the Origin; He had come from the Source and He had to return to the Source. He spent the time granted Him doing good deeds without any programmatic calculation and did nothing out of the ordinary, though what He did was intense, finished, authentic. He was simply a man who went about without joining any extremist groups, a man wholly disposed to forgive everything but hypocrisy. Moreover, even though He did nor discriminate against any group, He always seemed to take the side of the oppressed and the disinherited, and thus He ended His life. Although He saw the Origin that originates everything and suffered the impact of the forces of evil, He had an unlimited faith in the blowing of that wind that He called Spirit and that pervades everything. It was, in fact, the only thing that He left us as our inheritance.

He saw Himself as Man: Son of Man, barnasha (eighty-two times in the Gospels). He loved the name and discovered, for Himself and others, that His humanity was nothing other than the face of divinity, inseparable even though

distinct—so distinct, in fact, that He, in the form of that humanity, was painfully conscious of the existence of sin. Yet in Himself as well as in every other human being, He did not see evil but rather the kingdom of the heavens. This is what He preached and lived.

The man's birth was obscure. He spent a great deal of His life in the shadow, and His death was even more obscure. Yet He never experienced any frustration whatsoever; the moment power tempted Him. He despised it; and when He failed, He dared to promise His friends that He would really be present, not only through the Spirit but likewise through simple food and drink that they would consume in common. He neither employed violence nor allowed Himself to be impressed by power; He preached forgiveness and love and uttered words that, He insisted, did not originate from Him. He did not elaborate any doctrinal system: He spoke the language of His time.

"I have also heard" something else. I have heard twenty centuries of reflection on Jesus and dozens of doctrinal systems of every kind. I can neither ignore nor study them all. Great minds have offered us stupendous syntheses. I have learned from many of them. I have also heard of other extraordinary human figures of the past as well as the present. Holiness (if I may use the word), wisdom, and fulfillment may well be a rare plant yet it is a plant that grows in all climates and at all times.

I have also heard of painful controversies and prejudiced confrontations among and between followers and disciples; I have even been compelled to take sides. A phrase I heard came to my help: "He who is not against you is with you"—although the opposite assertion, "He who is not with me is against me," has saved me from literal readings and unchallengeable assertions out of context. The "you" of the community is not the "me" of the Resurrected One who is always present and hidden in every man of eood will.

I have heard, furthermore, that we must necessarily practice discernment. This realization has led me to discover the priority of personal experience, thus achieving what a different tradition knows as nitya-anitya-usitu-viveka (discernment between the temporal and the eternal—reflected in a famous work by a virtually forgotten Jesuit, Juan Isusebio Nieremberg). Since it is on myself that I must rely, it is on purifying my entire self that I must work. Although the task never ends, it has liberated me from absolutizing my convictions.

I have, moreover, heard so many things that I have been obliged to listen ever more attentively to the Spirit. And then, if I may return to the theme in part 3, I have simplified everything in a "trinity" of words. It is neither the fear of being stoned nor declared a heretic—I am always ready to make corrections—that restrains me, much less the fear of saying what others prefer not to hear; it is, rather, the impossibility of embodying in words what I have

heard. I can only hope that the words will resonate whenever true listening occurs in the depth of the heart where Life vivifies us, while rocks ("the living stones") become fire, purifying everything, and God becomes all in all.

#### "Itipaśyāmi"

"This I see." The inner life of Jesus reveals a universal experience. History proves it. But it is I too—intensity and purity aside—who am in a position to understand and live that experience. In fact, every human being is able to do so, even though the language and therefore the doctrines may be different, even reciprocally incompatible.

I am nor assuming a dialectical position when I assert that I have no hesitation in saying, "I am God"—because God has said "I am Man." That would be wrong. What I am doing, rather, is describing my own experience in an intimate, personal way. I simply feel that the divine is in me and, moreover, that I experience the unity that makes my life truly real. Yet I am fully aware how far I still am from that achievement. Paradoxically, the closer I think I am to that ideal, the farther away of I feel. And when I look around me and analyze human history, I understand the anguished question: "How many have achieved salvation, plenitude, fulfillment?" (see Mr 19:25; Mk 10:26; Lk 18:26). Perhaps the door opens at the last minute—I do not know.

The kenösis of the Son of Man is neither His singular privilege, nor did it occur because He was humble: it occurred because He was Man. Moreover, it is perhaps one of the most pregnant manifestations of the human condition. We are all kenotic, emptied of the divinity that is lodged hidden in each one of us; we are all naked, so to speak, without our most authentic clothing. Even though we all have a divingin and are temples of divinity, we appear, all of us, not only to others but even to ourselves, as mere individual members of a species subject to suffering and death. Jesus did not hide this situation from us—in fact, it is only a divine person who can reveal so much humanity, a humanity brimming with divinity.

Even though I find it difficult to express, I can surely observe that not only Jesus's life but mine too bears an infinite value precisely because it is limited in form and manifestation. My life is unique and thus beyond comparison; it cannot be compared to or placed on the same plane as anything else. It is precisely in my being finite, being concrete, being contingent that I touch the infinite, the divine.

"I see" that the man of Galilee shared my human condition. It is this sense of uniqueness that constitutes my dignity. Nothing and nobody can take my place precisely because there is no substitute for my place in the universe: this is the mystery of Man. The Son of Man shows me that I too must fulfill myself as son of man—precisely as man.

Many persons tend to identify themselves with the role they play in society: citizen, politician, worker, physician, farmer, parent, spouse. Religious identifications are even more subtle: Christian, Buddhist, monk, priest, or spiritual roles such

as saint, Iguru, sammyäsin. Yet these ways of living neither exhaust our being nor touch the heart of what we essentially are: a microcosm of the whole of reality, the lineage of the Sat-purus, a nicon of divinity. I know the All, the Father, hadman, God, and (at the same time) I am a spark, the Son, ätman, a creature: the you of the I by virtue of the Spirit. The man Jesus actualized this union, henösis, as Origen defined it (or anakrasis, which he distinguished from the hypostatic communion of the incarnation that he called koinônia in Contra Celsum III.41). The early councils defined the union as both completely human and completely divine; and this kind of union constitutes the divine aspect of the human condition that is common to all of us, and which included, naturally, Jesus Christ.

#### "Sat-puruşa"

The mysticism of Jesus Christ is simply human mysticism. What else could it be? It is the ultimate experience of man as Man. Sat-purusa signifies not only an individual or exemplar of the human species but also the plenitude of what we all are. Although we speak of divinization, we must observe that the moment we cease being men, that divinization may turn into alienation. In addition, although we may believe in annihilation, the moment we abandon what we truly are, that annihilation may become evasion. We may indeed accept our humanity, although this too may be synonymous with a passive acceptance of our defact if we renounce what we truly are or fall into a plain "homocentrism" closed to any form of self-transcendence.

I would dare say Jesus's experience was that pure human experience which, without denying any of them, transcends all kinds of peculiarities. It is only by being concrete that we can become universal. Jesus's experience did not consist in His being a male or a Jew, much less a Christian, a member of a class, a caste, a party, or a religion: it was solely the experience of being man, Son of man. This, His kenisis, made it possible for Him to speak to all of us from the depths of our true humanity, from the authentic center of what we truly are. Paradoxically enough, the more we free ourselves from every attribute or role, the more we are ourselves and discover ourselves to be completely human and even more divine.

Insofar as we are human beings, we must leave as individuals. Everyone has left, including Jesus. Insofar as we are divine, after we have left, the Spirit will remain. We do not leave reality deprived of our experience. We have been—forever.

All this may be incompatible with a rigid monotheism. We are nor God; God alone is God. But Christ is God's Son, one with the Father inasmuch as the divine mystery is pure gift, donation. In traditional words, the Son is generated and the Spirit proceeds from the Source. The whole universe is engaged in the process. In Christian language, the whole of reality is Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. It is not only all the divine mysteries but likewise the whole mystery of creation that is held within this Christ—in a process of growth and maturation.

Seen from this level of experience, let us also say that if any follower of Shiva or anyone else should claim that he needs neither Jesus nor even the name of Jesus, the answer is unequivocal: let him indeed go, let him not cling to Jesus, to that name, to that symbol. Otherwise the Spirit will not come "to teach us the whole truth," a truth that in fact reveals to us that nobody possesses a monopoly on personal realization. It is fitting, both for Christians and for others, that Jesus leave. "Why do you call me good?" "The Father is greater than me," or as Marius Victorinus said after his conversion from Neoplatonism to Christianity in 360, "The Father is related to the Son as Nothingness (ô µì ôw; ho mê ôn) to Being (ô ôw)." It is in the kenôsis of our ego that what we really are arises. Meister Echhart, too, in his treatise Abgescheidenbeit (Deutsche Werke 5:431) cites our third mahāuākya to tell us that if we do not detach ourselves even from Jesus's humanity, we will not be given the perfect joy (wolkomene Lust) of the Holy Spirit.

Every word we employ is loaded with specific connotations, yet if we attempt to describe the mysticism of Jesus the Christ, we could not express it without recourse to words. "The purusa is everything," a Vedic verse recites (RV X.90.2). Everything depends on how it is interpreted: cosmic man, divine man, perfect humanity. Ecce homo! Pilate said. Purusottama, "the highest man" (see BG VIII.1; X.15; XV.18-19) is the supreme divine form, paramam rūpam aišvaram, the Gitā says (XI.3.9).

If I should assert that Jesus Christ is He who has fully realized His human condition, I would only be uttering an empty phrase unless I were to explicate it by adding that this also constitutes our destiny. Were it to be explained outside its proper context, it would constitute, moreover, a limiting assertion—the paramam purusam dinyam, "the supreme divine man," again the Gitā says (VIII.8.10). We are touching lightly the ineffable.

We cannot understand mysticism in the third person, nor even in the second. But the first person, in order to break the silence, must have someone to talk to. This someone, however, cannot be an imaginary reader: he must be a Thou, an it, it, advauta who, in turning everything upside down, converts me into a thou. Silence is therefore the final experience inasmuch as it reveals the fact that the Word emerges out of Silence by virtue of Love. The Word, as we have already said, is nothing other than the cestasy of Silence.

To sum up, the mystery of Christ is the mystery of the whole of reality—divine, human, cosmic, without confusion yet without separation. Christ would not be Christ were He not divine, were He indeed not God. The divine cannot be splintered into parts. Were He not thuman, were He not the whole of humanity, Christ would not be Christ. Yet this humanity, distended in time, is not yet nor ever will be finished as long as time is time, and time has no end because the end is itself already temporal. And Life is precisely this novelty or constant creation. Were not Christ corporeal, were He indeed not the whole of corporeality, Christ would not be Christ. Yet this bodiliness or materiality extended in space is not yet nor ever will be finished as long as space is space, since the limit of space is already spatial. Matter is part of reality, together with the other "two" dimensions, in infinite interpenetration. In Jesus Christ, Christians see this symbol as a radiant point that, in blinding us, makes

us glimpse—and therefore not "see" but rather "feel," "live," enjoy—the experience of Light on Mount Tabor in its totality.

The human tongue must remain silent; every *logos* is insufficient by itself. "It is good that I leave."

Perhaps the most theological expression that corresponds to the philosophical formulation according to which transcendence can be discovered only in immanence is to say—reflecting the patristic tradition—that God can be seen only in the Spirit.

Psalm 36:9 raises a hymn to this truth with extreme simplicity and beauty:

For with you is the fountain of life in your light we see the light.

In the Latin Vulgate:

Quoniam apud te est fons vitae et in lumine tuo videmus lumen.

I now invite the reader to a contemplative pause. In order to grasp the living reality of symbols, we need the third eye.

#### Part 3

# Christophany

The Christic Experience

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν

ipse est ante omnia et omnia in ipso constant

He is first of all things and all things subsist in him.

Col 1:17



#### Nine Sutra

The problem of Christ has unleashed some of the most profound reflections of the Western mind, not only of professional theologians but also of philosophers, irrespective of the differences in creeds or ecclesiastical communities. Classical theology maintains that in Christ's revelation there is a novum, both for the history of humanity and human nature itself. Philosophical thought, on the other hand, tends to say that what theologians are discussing is inherent in human nature, although under different forms. In any case, philosophy seems to have enjoyed the better part and to have virtually swallowed up the novum of Christ. We have already spoken of theology as the handmaid of philosophy (theologia ancilla philosophiae), despite positions that hold the contrary.

These sitrus intend to constitute a middle way between classical theology, which inserts the figure of Christ in a monotheistic frame, more or less qualified, and a theoclastic current that wishes to "free" Christ (and Christianity) from every bond with "God."

I use the word sūtra rather than thesis because the deductive method is not valid for the sūtra, which speaks to us from within a level of consciousness that must already have been artained before we can grasp its meaning. Human thought cannot be limited—I would say degraded—to the formula induction/deduction, as the predominance of modern scientific "thought" frightens us into believing. No one can deduce an oak from a seed; some of the oak's properties may be derived from its physico-chemical composition but not the oak itself.

These nine saims are not theses to be defended. They are, rather, condensations of experiences lived (and often suffered) within the framework of tradition. They are "threads" that, along with others, form the texture of reality. It is up to the reader to make a carpet out of them, perhaps even a tapestry. After all, not even the seed is born of itself: it needs the humus in which to ground itself.

These threads should link us to the past and open us to the future.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The third part of the book deepens, amplifies, and corrects a hastily published small work titled Cristofania (Bologna: EDB, 1984) and a too radically abbreviated article prepared for a conference and published as "A Christophany for Our Times," Theology Digest 39 (1992): 3-21. as well as in Panikkar (1993b), 64-73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See, among many others, Weischedel (1975), who shows to what extent we find an implicit Christology in Western philosophers when they take up the problem of God.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Duquoc (1977), who, along with many others, confirms our "virtually" by demonstrating Jesuss distance from a certain Judaic and Hellenistic monotheism, from which, however, He has not liberated Himself. There is a brief summary of this theme in Fraij6 (1996).

#### 1. Christ Is the Christian Symbol for the Whole of Reality

Any assertion that says less than this first and crucial sūtra cannot do justice to either Christian fairh or the experience of virtually all human traditions-rhough under other names and in different contexts. More or less explicitly, the various cultures of the world claim to possess a coherent cosmovision. Coherence does not necessarily mean the rationality of a logical system as much as the exigency of an ultimate experience, a central symbol. I use the word "symbol" to express an experience of reality in which subject and object, the interpretation and the interpreted, the phenomenon (our voue vov phainomenon) and its noumenon, are inextricably linked. Symbolic knowledge is irreducible to rational evidence and any kind of dialectic. God, being, matter, energy, world, mystery, light, man, spirit, and idea are examples of such symbols. The symbol symbolizes the symbolized in the symbol itself and is to be found nowhere else. It is different from a simple sign. Those who. faithful to the Enlightenment mentality, confuse the sign, epistemic in nature, with the symbol, ontological in character, could misunderstand this sūtra as if it defended a Gnostic interpretation of Christ. Nothing could be further from the spirit of this sūtra, which employs the word "symbol" in the same sense in which Christian tradition refers to the sacraments.5

As the Christian tradition emerged from Judaic monorheism and confronted a certain Greek polytheism, on one hand, and philosophical monism, on the other, it has reconquered the most ancient Trinitarian tradition concerning reality as Heaven-Earth-Man, or as God-World-Humanity, or even as Spirit-Matter-Consciousness. Christ is that central symbol that incorporates the whole of reality. By this I don't mean to say that the notion of the Christian Trinity (without which the symbol "Christ" loses its full meaning) is the same as that of other religious traditions, since every culture constitutes a symbolic world. I do insist, however, that the experience of reality as Trinitarian, though very differently understood, seems to be virtually universal.

Christ is "that light which illuminates all those who come into this world" (Jn 19). Are "verything has been made through him" (Jn 1:3), and "in him all things subsist" (Col 1:1?). "hie is the only bom" (Jn 1:18) and "the firstborn" (Col 1:15); "the alpha and omega" (Rev 1:8), the beginning and end of all, the "Son of God" equal to God, the teon of all reality, the "head of a body" (Col 1:18) still "in becoming in the pain of childbirth" (Rom 8:22). The adventure of reality is a spatial and temporal egressus (going out) from God and a regressus (return) to the source, constantly proceeding beyond, to the infinite—by the "work" of the Spirit, which "prevents" reality from becoming duality. The "return" does not carry us back to the point of departure inas-

<sup>4</sup> Panikkar (1981a).

<sup>5</sup> See Dupuis (1989), 187; and Wong (1984), 624.

<sup>6</sup> See BUIV.3.2; 3.7-8; CUIII.13.7-17, for a homeomorphic equivalent of this interior and divine light.

Nine Sütra 245

much as God is not a geometrical point but an actus purus (pure actuality, dynamism). This extension (spatial) and distension (temporal) are united in the (human) tension of Man as he "grows to the full awareness of Christ" (Ep 4:13). "God becomes man so that man may become God," as I have said before, in the light of patristic tradition. This "becoming" is a way that does not lead anywhere else inasmuch as God is everywhere, Jesus's phrase, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (In 14:6) is not to be understood necessarily in an objective nor even conceptual sense. The way is precisely the truth of out life. Although the meaning of the way does reside in the goal, it is on the road of life itself that the goal is found—and found in every step that is authentic—without the need of quoting Meister Eckhart (Deutsche Werke 5:35). We are talking about the symbol "Christ," which Christian culture has often identified as seodness, truth, and beauty.

Here I should comment on the song of Christ of Philippians or the cosmic texts of Colossians, Ephesians, Corinthians, and Romans, or the book of Revelation, of John's Gospel and even the Synoptics. Christ was "before Abraham" (Jn 8:58) and will be "the last" (1 Cor 15:28). Whatever is done to the smallest and most insignificant is done to Him (Mt 25:40). "In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3). We are simply remembering—that is, bringing into our minds and hearts, the central point of the Christian understanding of reality, which is precisely "the man Jesus Christ"—"mediator" (1 Tim 2:5) and not intermediaty—that is, "fully divine and fully human," "inseparable yet distinct" from divinity, as later tradition will express.

The cosmovision that prevailed throughout the patristic period, in which the church's christological consciousness was formed, made the cosmic interpretations of Christ's function plausible. The world of the angels was particularly important. One tenth of the angels were lost (the fallen angels), just as the woman in the Gospel lost one of her silver coins (Lk 15:8-10). This loss was made up by mankind—thereby completing the ten orders of angels. One hundredth of creation—that is, humankind—is lost, as the lost sheep, and Christ, the good shepherd, abandons everything in order to recover Man lost in sin. Origen goes so far as to say that "Christ, the whole of mankind-indeed, the whole creation as body, and each one of us-is a member according to the part he plays in creation."7 Tradition reechoes the Scriptures in a free interpretation (Mt 5:48; Col 4:12; Jas 1:4; 3:2; Ph 3:12; 2 Co 13:11; Ep 4:13; Col 1:28), as it speaks to us of the perfect man, τέλειος ἄνθρωπος (teleios anthropos [the whole man]), who unites and represents the whole of human nature.8 And this Christ is from the very beginning. St. Jerome fights the heresy of the Ebionites, who assert that "Christ did not exist before Mary" (Christum ante Mariam non fuisse). and argues that this is the reason John the Evangelist strongly accentuates Christ's divinity (De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis 9).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> PG 12.1330A; see von Balthasar (1938), 399.

<sup>8</sup> See Haas (1971), 52-63, who summarizes the patristic conception and gives us a pertinent bibliography.

Although it is not necessary to accept this vision of the world, we certainly cannot be satisfied with scientific cosmology—which in any case does not wish centangle itself in "theological" questions. The Christian vision today, however, has lost its foundation inasmuch as it lacks an adequate cosmovision, while theology runs the risk of either engaging in empty talk or being misunderstood. The modern cosmovision has lost a sense of the third dimension.

A nonreductive Christian vision should be able to assert that every being is a Christophany, a manifestation of the Christic adventure of the whole of reality on its way to the infinite mystery. I repeat, the whole of reality could be called, in Christian language, Father, Christ, Holy Spirit—the Font of all reality, reality in its act of being (that is, its becoming, the existing reality which is "the whole Christ" (Christus totus), not yet fully realized, and the Spirit (the wind, the divine energy that maintains the perichiretis in movement).

It should thus be clear that the homeomorphic equivalent of Christ, in a comparative study, is not that of an avatāra, a descent of the divine for the purpose of sustaining the dharma and saving a particular katpa ("con"; see BG IV.7—8). An avatāra is not a real being in the world of the samṣāra but a true manifestation of the divine in docetic form. Krishna is not a man; he is a God, a manifestation of God human form. Christ, in the eyes of the Christian church, is neither a member of the pantheon nor a realized, divinized individual; His divinization is not an accident. Christ is the very incarnation of God, His firstborn, to cite anew a different tradition; pārvo bi tatab (SUII.16).

Let us note again that, within a monotheistic theology, the incarnation is nothing but an accident in God and represents, to say the least, a great difficulty. The Absolute cannot become Man—nor can anything else. Within a Trinitarian vision, however, the centrality of Christ with respect to the whole of reality is a direct consequence the incarnation. It is not Christocentrism precisely because the Trinity has no center and nothing human and created stands outside that Word through which all things were made—intuitions that have been expressed in many traditions. Meister Eckhart is not the only one to assert that the dignity of Man originates in the incarnation.

The assertion that "there is no salvation outside of  $\overline{Christ}$ " is almost a tautology. Salvation means full realization or, in traditional terms, divinization, and divinization occurs only in union with the divine—whose symbol in Christian language is Christ. If this threats is not an illusory aspect but a real "participation in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), it is realized only if we become one with Christ—that is, if we become part of the Christus totus so as to be type Christus (Christ Himself). This is what St. Paul suggests when he attempts to interpret the Gospel's invitation to be perfect like the Father who is in heaven. That "mystery that has been kept secret for long ages" (χρόνοις αἰωνίοις [Rom 16:25]) is what Christians understand as Christ. Christ is human and divine without confusion of the two natures and, nevertheless, without rupture of any kind.

When we say that "Christ is the symbol of the whole of reality," we intend to say that not only are "all the treasures of divinity" included in Christ, but that "all the

Nine Sütra 247

mysteries of man" as well as the thickness of the universe are also hidden in Him. He is not only the "firstborn" but the "only begotten," the symbol of reality itself, the cosmothendric symbol par excellence.

As the symbol of the whole divinization of the universe, Christ is the theoist of the Greek fathers. The Roman liturgy for centuries has chanted, "Per ipsum, cum ippo, in ippo" (Through Him, with Him, in Him) all the dimensions of reality meet and "all things hold together in him" (Col 1:17). The whole universe is called to share the Trinitarian perithörēsis, in and through Christ. Some speak of the cosmic Christ, others of the Christus totus. I would prefer to call Him the cosmotheandric Christ, or simply the Christ.

I close this first sutra with a text of St. Bonaventure that sums up the tradition of the past and contains an intuition that is also valid for the future:

Respice ad propitatorem et mira, quod in ipso principium primum iuncum est cum postremo, Deus cum homine esto die formatum (Gn 1:26), aeternum iuncum est cum homine temporali, in plenitudine temporum de Virgine nato, simplicissimum cum summe composito actualissimum cum summe passo et mortuo, perfectissimum et immensum cum modico, summe unum et omnimodum cum individuo composito et a ceteris distincto, homine stilleet leus Christo.

Look at the propitiator and admire, because in him the first principle is joined to the last, God with man formed the sixth (last) day (of creation), The eternal is joined to the temporal man born of the Virgin in the fullness of time(s), the simplest with the most composite, the most real with him who suffered and died, the most perfect and immense with the small, the absolutely one and multiform with an individual composite and distinct from others: that is the man lesus Christ.

St. Bonaventure, Itinerarium mentis in Deum VI.5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> See Gregory Nazianzen, Ontio XXV.16 (PG 35.1221); XXXIX.16 (PG 36.353); John Damascene, De fide orthodox. III.17 (PG 94.1069); IV.18 (PG 94.1184); Cyril of Alexandria, De trinitate XIV (PG 77.1152).

#### 2. The Christian Recognizes Christ in and through Jesus

It is known that "Christ" is a Greek name that translates the Hebrew word mashiah, which simply means "anointed." The generic meaning of this word has acquired a specific connotation within Judaim: the Messiah awaited by the people of Israel. Later, the specific Hebrew meaning was again transformed and individualized in the Christian tradition, as it came to mean Jesus, Mary's son. This Jesus, 'a propher powerful in works and words before God and the whole people" (Lk 24:19), became for Christians the revelation of Christ that was mentioned in the first sitra. Christians gradually stopped competing with the Jews and abandoned the pretension that Jesus was Israel's Messiah. The name of Christ assumed a new meaning, although it was still capable of arousing tensions and perplexities.

The Christian revolution manifested itself in the First Council of Jerusalem, which abolished circumcision (Ac 15:1ff.), the primordial pact of God with the Jewish people. This revolution consisted not in supplanting the Jewish Messiah with a condemned Jew but in recognizing in Jesus the man in whom "the whole fullness of divinity lives corporeally" (Col 2:9), and the revelation of the "heir of all things ... who sustains the whole universe with his word of power" (Heb 1:3).

In the Christian vision Jesus does not compete with the Hebraic Messiah. The Christian transformation does not consist in affirming that Jesus is the Hebraic Messiah—the reticence of Jesus Himself should indicate this with utmost clarity. It consists, rather, in proclaiming that in Jesus "the mystery that has been kept secret" since the beginning has now revealed itself (Rom 16:25), and that "through him all things have been created" (Col 1:16).

In other words, it is in Christian revelation that the Christian discovers the living Christ through whom the universe was made (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16). He who believes that "Jesus is the Christs" is a Christian. The existential confession manifests the salvation of whoever professes it. It is a confession, an existential affirmation, not an objective or objectifiable phrase. Nobody is saved by uttering a simple theoretical phrase (for example, the Pythagorean theorem), or a statement of fact (King Asoka existed), or even a prayer ("Lord, Lord"). The confession of His name is the same as the personal testimony of having encountered the reality that the name reveals. This is the reason why His name is "a name that saves," and "there is no other name under the sky through which we can attain salvation" (Ac 4:12; cf. Ph 2:9-10).

Nobody can say "Jesus is Lord" (Kyrios Ièsous) except through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3). Jesus is the Christia mahāvākya (great assertion). In fact, Christian tradition has joined the two in one sole name. Jesus Christ au undivided experience constitutes the central Christian dogma. The copula "is" collapses: otherwise, it would introduce an epistemic split of the unity of that experience.

It is interesting to observe that the expression employed in the sacred texts is not only "Jesus Christ" but also "Christ Jesus," 10 although we do find a homology and

<sup>10</sup> or "Jesus Christ," see, e.g., Mt 1:1; Jn 17:3; Ac 2:38; 3:6; 8:37; 9:34; Rom 1:6, 7; 13:14;

Nine Sütra 249

must not push this argument beyond its limits. In any event, this inversion bears a profound meaning: it confirms distinction on the one side and equivalence on the other. Christ is certainly not Jesus's surname.

Jesus is the one whom "the Spirit of the Lord" has consectated with unction (anointed, Messiah, Christ, ἔχρισεν, eebrisen; see Lk 4:18). This is what He sought to make the inhabitants of Nazareth understand during His first period of preaching, citing the prophet Isaiah (61:1). The relation between Jesus and the Christ was elaborated later by means of the Council of Chalecdon's four adverbs: ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως (αsynchytōs, atrepōs, adiairetiōs, aebōiristōs; Denz., 302), which Latin tradition renders as inconflue, immutabiliter (no confused "immutable," undivided, and "insparable").

The Trinitarian background within which this way of understanding the central reality of Christ makes sense: Jesus Christ cannor be God without qualification. He must be God of God, Light, of Light, God's Son, the Father's firstborn, only-begotten (prototokos, monogenži). And this Christ is acknowledged as one sole person in which the two natures subsist "in a unconfused, immutable, undivided, inseparable way." We need these four adverbs (not adjectives) in order to have an enlightened faith, to accomplish that requirement of "spiritual worship" (thy Nopytich) Zerpciav ten logiker laterian, rationabile obsequium of Rom 12:1), as tradition has interpreted it.

I emphasize the *in and through* of this *sūtra* in order to avoid possible misunderstanding; Jesus is Christ, but Christ cannot be identified completely with Jesus of Nazareth.

The misunderstanding derives from the unwarranted extrapolation of the modern scientific method applied to a reality that cannot be reduced to an algebraic formula that can be written on the blackboard. If A is B, B is A. But neither is Jesus A nor Christ B. The result, pars pro toto (the part for the whole), which in this context refers to symbolic knowledge, in our sūtra is applied to the iconophanic consciousness: the icon A is not the original of B, much less is it a simple image. Seen in the light of Mount Tabor, the icon is revelation, the unveiling of the original, the symbol that represents it, that makes it present to those who discover it as icon and not as copy. Jesus is the symbol of Christ—for Christians, obviously.

As for what concerns us, the eucharistic example would suffice. The Eucharist is the real presence of Christ, of the resurrected Christ (but does not contain the protein of Jesus of Nazareth).

The confession "Jesus is the Christ" presupposes a very concrete conception of history and matter and a particular anthropology, because Jesus is indubitably a corporeal reality and a true man. To assert that "the Jesus of history," Mary's son, is "the Christ of faith," the Christ of our first sūtra, is precisely what constitutes the scandal of Christian concreteness.

<sup>1</sup> Co 1:1-3, 9-10; 8:6; 16:22; Col 3:17. For "Christ Jesus" see, e.g., Ac 5:42; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 8:1; 1 Co 1:2, 30, 9:1; Gal 3:14; 4:14; Ep 1:1; 2:20; 3:21; Ph 2:5; 3:3; 3:12; 4:7; Col 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 4:13; 4:6; 2 Tim 1:2; 4:9; 2:3; 3:15; Ti 1:4; Phlm 6; 2 Jn 1:3.

However, the Christian scandal remains a scandal not only for others but for Christians themselves. This is the reason why to speculate about "Christian folly" and criticize non-Christians because they cannot understand and accept he greatness of Christianity—as if Christians were capable of understanding it!—signifies not only a deplorable pride but an apostasy as well. The cross cannot constitute a weapon against others. As Paul exclaims, "In that case the scandal of the cross has been removed" (Gal 5:11).

This is the reason why the confession "Jesus is the Christ" is constitutively open. The predicate of the proposition is a mystery, even though the subject is a concrete historical figure, Mary's son, the Jeshua who, faithful to His name Jeho-shua ("God is salvation") "has done all things well" ( $\kappa\alpha\lambda\delta \hat{o}_{S}$ ;  $kal\delta \hat{o}_{S}$  [Mk 7:37]). Using a bold metaphor, it has been said, "whoever enters into contact with the logar touches Jesus of Nazareth," because "in Christ God's being enters into unity with man's being," 11 Or, as more than one council has said, Christ assumes human nature, as there is no, nor was, nor will be any man whose nature has not been assumed in him [Christ], so there is not nor was not, nor will be any man for whom he has not suffered" "Situt nullus homo est, fuit vel erit, caius natura in illo assumpta non fuerit, ita nullus est, fuit vel erit homo, pro quo passus non fuerit"; Synod of Quiercy in 835; see Denz., 624). This statement echoes the entire partistic and medieval tradition. <sup>12</sup>

This second stitus asserts that the Christian encounters Christ in and through Jesus. It is a personal meeting, an "existential touch." At the same time it is necessive to return to the gnösis of Christian tradition, in which "experiential knowledge" often recurs in the writings of Paul and John. This is in conformity with both Hebrew and Greek traditions, as well as all those human cultures in which knowledge is an ontological activity and not a simple epistemological operation. "This is eternal life, that they know you, Jesus Christ" (Jn 17:3). This salvific knowing is something more than a conviction of the mind or a doctrinal affirmation. Neither Christian nor the Walte gnösis is Gnosticism—which occurs when gnösis becomes purely epistemic.

## 3. The Identity of Christ Is Not the Same as His Identification

Modern nominalistic and scientific methods of approaching reality have so infiltrated theological thought that the question about what an individual is become confused with who that person is. Despite such nominalism, having understood a concept leads many to believe that they have grasped the thing. It is significant that the very "individuality" of an elementary particle should become problematic even in theoretical physics. According to Werner Heisenberg's widely known theories, we can now record the discovery that the observer always modifies what is being observed. It is surprising that this fact has been forgotten by modern philosophers, who conceive of thought as only an epistemological reflection (the thing's image)

<sup>11</sup> Ratzinger (1993), 707.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion of Eckhart's similar thesis in Haas (1971), 26ff.

Nine Sütra 251

and not an ontological activity (the action of being itself). This is the price that has been paid when the third eye or the mystical vision has been eliminated from philosophy. Thought about reality is not, in fact, a simple mirroring of reality but an action on it—nor are we referring only to parapsychological facts, much less magic, but to the spiritual life as well, to prayer and our entire psychic life. In brief, the Cartesian coordinates help us to identify a phenomenon but not to know the identity of the event. Perhaps it will be useful for me to repeat briefly what I have said above in part 2 of this book.

Although identity and identification cannot be separated, they are not the same thing. A boy, for example, may be identified by the police as intent upon taking drugs. Although his identity is that of the boy his parents know and love, his identity cannot be separated from the police's identification. In an analogous way, we can know the objective identification of Jesus. He was born and died at a specific time and place and left sufficient signs to make it possible to identify Him. We are certain that we are referring to a precise individual. We can know all this, but his true identity of na present. Jove is required.

As I have said, Peter discovered the thou of Christ in His famous answer to the question about Jesus's identity (Mr 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21). The apostle answered with the titles at His disposal. Jesus is identified as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (words that His teacher told him not to make public). Nevertheless, Peter was called blessed, not because he had given an exact answer but rather because he had discovered the thou, the profounder identity of Christ, which required revelation on God's part. I abstain from giving an Upanishadic understanding of Peter's answer, but its essence was "Thou art" (neam sai). In this context it is enough to underscore the discovery of the personal "you" in the meeting with Christ. This discovery is the work of "neither flesh nor blood," nor calculation nor feeling.

The difference between identity and identification can explain Jesus's reticence in revealing His own identity. Whoever has experienced the unbridgeable abyss of the "I" will feel the necessity of keeping his own identity veiled, revealing it only to those for whom the subject—object division is overcome—that is, to those one loves, to the innocent (see Mt 11:25–27; Lk 10:21). Jesus answered neither Herod nor Pilate.

Too often Christologies have concentrated on the identification of Jesus. They have forgotten that identity is not an objectifiable caregory and have proceeded to project into different contexts the identity of Jesus Christ, which was discovered in a particular cultural situation. The predicate will never lead us to know the subject fully. "S is P" is not identical with "S is"; and this last formulation is not identical with "S," as Buddhist thought emphasizes. For example, the assertion that Jesus is Messiah is destined to be both misunderstood and alienating in India. India does not belong to the lineage of Abraham. Nor is the identity of a person the sum of his attributes: on the contrary, attributes serve to identify a person.

The corollary of this point is the specific ontological and epistemological status of theology and philosophy, inasmuch as Christian theology is only a particular field

of philosophic activity. Except in certain periods, like the Enlightenment, philosophy has never pretended to be an exclusive work of reason (opus rationis). If philosophy has never pretended to be an exclusive work of reason (opus rationis). If philosophy is the name that signifies Man's intention to discover the meaning of life and reality through every means we believe we can utilize, then it is the intellectual (and not only rational) companion of the wisdom of life directed toward salvation, whether one calls it realization, liberation, or something else. Philosophic meditation is the conscious companion of Man's pilgrimage on earth, and this pilgrimage is religion.

If a contemporary reflection on Christ is to be faithful to the real—and not only conceptual content—it must reflect Christ and not limit itself to the exegesis of exets; it must seek the identity of Christ and not be content with His identification. Now the fact of approaching a knowledge of Christ's identity implies an attempt to know both His self-consciousness to the extent that it is possible and our experience of faith to the extent to which experience permits an intelligible reflection. "Who do the people say that I am?" (Mk 8:27). This is what I have sought to answer in part 2.

In terms of religious phenomenology, the neologism pisteuma (from the Greek word pistis, "belief") complements the noëma (from the Greek word nous., "mind") of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. While the latter is a content of human consciousness purified of any extrinsic connotation through the eidetic intuition, the former is an enlightened and critical consciousness in which the believer's faith is not bracketed in the phenomenological epachē. What the believer believes (the pisteuma), and not what the observer thinks (the noëma), is the aim of religious phenomenology.

The relation between identity and identification presents a particular tension in Christian history. If the who of Christ is "His divine person," Christian spirituality will tend to be in tune with Neoplatonism and will rise to the mystical heights of a Dionysius the Areopagite, of Christian gnôsis, or the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to offer some examples. If the who of Christ is "His human nature," Christian spirituality will tend to be in tune with the living and loving Jesus and will develop the nuptial mysticism of Bernard, Catherine, or Teresa, to cite some examples. We speak of tension, not a split, because the great Christian figures have maintained the creative polarity between the human and divine dimensions. Appropriately, it was Origen who first wrote a Christian commentary on the Song of Songs; John of the Cross, the disciple of Teresa, the great lover of the humanity of Jesus, penetrated the depths of His divinity, where nothing more exists; in his Summa theologiae Thomas Aguinas cites Dionysius more than anyone else; William Law was converted by reading Jakob Böhme. In recalling the last verse of the Divine Comedy, "the love that moves the sun [of the intellect] and the other stars [of the heart]," we are reminded that bhakti (devotion) and iñāna (knowledge) cannot be separated, as the medieval mystic Iñanesvar has shown so magnificently.

The identity that is discovered in a personal encounter must accept the criteria of identification and thus must seek to discover the identity, which in turn confirms that the identification is correct. The devil, after all, can quote Scripture to his advantage (Mt 4:6). Even the angel of light that pretends to be Christian (and believes

Nine Sütra 253

he has achieved identity) can conceal the same demon. And let us remember that the personal meeting we have mentioned is not to be understood in the sense of a two-dimensional anthropomorphism.

#### 4. Christians Do Not Have a Monopoly on the Knowledge of Christ

If faith in the mystery of Christ transcends but in no way denies or contradicts the manifestation that takes place in Jesus, reflection on the acts of Jesus, including the Christian experience of Christ, does not exhaust the richness of the reality Christians cannot but call Christ.

"The name above all names" (τό ὄνομα τό ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομά to noma to hyper pan onoma [Ph 2:9]) also stands above the name of Jesus. It is a "supername," a name present in every authentic invocation. It is surprising that the hymn in which it appears (Ph 2:5–11, which does not recognize any distinctive property right to the point of praising the kenõisi as the self-emptying of Christ Jesus), should have been understood as a justification for Christians to appropriate to chemselves the one who so "emptied himself" as to "accept obedience and death on the cross" (8). It is a paradox that Christians should fight to make exclusive precisely that "no other name" of the one who renounced all names and emptied Himself even of human dignity by assuming the form of a slave—which at the time meant someone deprived of ever vight.

My book The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (1964) was dedicated to the unknown Christ as a parallel to the "unknown God" of whom St. Paul speaks (Ac 17:23). However, the book has at times been misunderstood as if it were speaking of the Christ known to Christians and unknown to Hindus.

The "unknown Christ of Hinduism" is unknown a fortiori to Christians. And Hindus have no need to call Him by the Greek name. Similarly, calling the Christ "Messiah" in the Judaic sense would be going astray, attributing to the same name of Christ homeomorphic equivalences of other religions. Just as a unique relation exists between the Hebrew mashiah and the Christos, so too there are relations that have not yet been brought to light between Christ and homeomorphic equivalents in other religious traditions. But the relation must occur from both sides. Thus, for example, although from a Judaic-Christian-Islamic point of view we can speak of a cosmic testament that refers to other religions, it is not enough to use this concept without listenting to how the Christ is seen in other cultures.<sup>13</sup>

No religion that is lived in depth will be content with representing a part of the whole. It will rather yearn for the whole, even if in a limited and imperfect way, Every religion wishes to show a path to "realize" reality, and reality is whole. But every person and every religion participates in, enjoys, arrives at, lives in that whole in a limited way. Nobody has a monopoly on the whole, and no one can completely

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> In this sense we should complement Dupuis (1997).

satisfy the human thirst for the infinite and content herself with a part of the whole. Once again, we apply an inadequate method if we limit ourselves to quantifying and calculating when we treat such vital problems. The whole exists in every iconophany, but it does so "as in a mitror and in a dark manner" (1 Co 13:12).

The fact that Christians do not have full knowledge of the symbol they call Christ shows that they are not masters of Christ and confirms that Christ transcends all understanding. If, in Christian language, Christ is the savior of humanity and the redeemer and glorifier of the cosmos, we must again ask who this Christ is. We need to explain how the mystery Christians call Christ is manifested in other religions. Although the latter do not speak of Christ, they possess different symbols to which they attribute a salvific function, which, in a homeomorphic sense, is equivalent to the function of Christ. Christians assert that, even though unnamed and unknown, it is Christ who exercises this salvific function. Is it a question, then, of the same unique Christ?

The question requires a threefold answer. First, from a philosophic point of view, a given answer depends on the question itself: there is no answer that is universally and "objectively" valid. Every answer depends on the precomprehension of the question itself, which delineates the context in which the answer takes place. Moreover, when the question regards the ultimate problem, we cannot apply the more or less cryptor-Kantian idea of a "thing in itself", named "the self-same Christ." The self of "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and throughout the centuries" (Heb 13:8), is an ever-new present, a constant new creation (see 2 Co 5:17). The mystery of Christ is not, in terms made familiar by Xant, a Ding an sich (a thing in itself').

I have already mentioned different parameters of intelligibility; I must add that the philosophical problem is inescapable. When there is reference to Jesus of Nazareth, what are we talking about? About a man, the son of a Jewish woman who lived centuries ago and was followed by a small group of disciples who left written testimonies about Him, and who then spread throughout the whole earth—and also left behind a jungle of interpretations of His very personality. Jesus was certainly a historical person who lived in a specific period in history. But who was this man? Is history the decisive factor of reality? What is Man? Certainly more than a body, and even more, perhaps, than a soul. Again, what does "body," what does "soul" mean? To limit the human person to being an exemplar of the race of anthropoids in time and space is to remain within a reductionistic anthropology. Are we certain that a historical biography and a reading of his writings are sufficient to reveal who Rajagopalachari really was—which includes, perhaps, that he was more than a statesman of India's independence? If we think that a person's reality is one and the same as his historical existence, we are eliminating a priori any answer that does not include the person's historical dimension and context. If, moreover, we believe that what a person thinks of herself does not touch her being, we are already presupposing an answer conditioned by a contemporary understanding of objectivity. These problems indicate that the very subject of Christophany depends on the conception we have formed of the subject in question. While this study does not intend to negate

NINE SOTRA 255

Jesus's historicity, neither does it accept a priori the presupposition that a person's historicity exhausts his whole being.

To speak of a historical (that is, real) being and to believe that this is the way Man can be understood presupposes that historical existence is the formal constitutive of the person and that the person is an individual.

Second, from the point of view of other religions, the answer to the question of whether the matter being treated is 'the self-same Christ' under different names decidedly no. These religions possess as self-understanding and validity that they can sustain with arguments based on their experience; they have no need of employing any Christian parameters but will use their own categories of understanding and will interpret the other religions of the world, including Christianity, on their own terms. Christ neither is nor has any reason for being their point of reference. Of course, Buddhists may be called "anonymous Christians" on condition that Christians are seen as "anonymous Buddhists." Nevertheless, there is a difference; while for Christian self-understanding the discourse of the anonymous Christian can have a certain meaning, for a large part of the Buddhist world an anonymous Buddhists is an unnecessary hypothesis since no comparable problem exists.

This requires a change of perspectives for Christians, because a true understanding among the various religions can never be a one-way street. The whole effort to understand what Christians call Christ within the sphere of orter religions must be related to the problems that concern the nature of the Buddha, the Qur'an, the Torah, the Chi, the Kami, the Dharma, and the Tao, as well as truth, justice, peace, and many other symbols. What Christ represents in other religions is to be confronted with the complementary question of what the other symbols might represent within Christianity. It would then be possible to find a common ground in which dialogue may become fruitful.

Ido not intend to assert that every name that is evoked might represent "the elf-same Christs." Such names may be, at best, homeomorphic equivalents—although it is not necessary that such equivalents exist. We should respect pluralism in the sense that, within this perspective, incompatibility and incommensurability become possible—something that excludes neither dialogue nor the defense of each person's own beliefs.

Third, from the perspective of Christian reflection, the answer is affirmative, though qualified. It is affirmative in the sense that Christ—symbol of reality's ultimate mystery—implies a certain aspiration for the universal, which is common to virtually all religions. Everything that has been said that is true, both Buddhists and Christians 191, is respectively Buddhist and Christians 191, the twiew of Islam, before society confines one within a particular religion, every person is born a Muslim. Here is the same human syndrome that cannot easily accept the fact that its own truth is not objective and universal. 19 Reservations, on the other hand, regard the

<sup>14</sup> See the inscriptions of Asoka; Lamotte (1958); Justin, Apologia II.13 (PG 6.465).

<sup>15</sup> See Panikkar (1990).

fact that every culture can understand only in the light of its own parameters of intelligibility, which, moreover, cannot enurcritically extrapolated. In addition, we cannot answer the question of whether or not we are dealing with the same Christ, because the "unknown Christ" of other religions is truly unknown to Christians who, in any event, possess no other name to designate Him. In order not to make Christ a sectarian figure Christians speak of an unknown Christ. When they refer to the ultimate mystery, other religions legitimately use other languages and thus prevent Christian language from becoming a universal language.

There are two difficulties in accepting this sūtra's intelligibility. The first, which I have already sought to clarify, arises when we identify Christ and Jesus; the second, when we turn Christ into a substance. This is the same difficulty we encountered when the Trinity is thought of as a substance.

This sūrna, which is clear enough if we listen to the sacred texts about Christ, is likewise the fruit of the human experience that faith makes possible. Nevertheless, it has often been received with a certain reticence, on one hand, because the mystical dimension in Christian life and theology has been forgotten, and on the other, because of the thought patterns (the forma mentis) of the Mediteranean people. This mentality is, above all, sensitive to differences and considers "the specific difference" to be the essence of a thing. In contrast, let us consider the form of thought of the Chindagy-u-apanizad and, more specifically, the introduction to the greatest mahāušbyāni (maxims) in the Vedic tradition so as to see a different form through which one reaches the intelligibility of a thing or an event. The prevalent form for reaching intelligibility in modern Western culture is based on classification and differences. In the Hindu mentality, as I have tried to explain elsewhere, intelligibility or identive.

In this brief philosophical digression, I have tried to explain why, because of the forma ments of the primacy of differentiation for so many centuries, Christian thought believed that Christ's identity would be lost if it abandoned the specificity that differentiates it. A further deepening of this hypothesis could be of great importance for the Christian thought of the next millennium.

## 5. Christophany Transcends Tribal and Historical Christology

The fifth sūrsa constitutes another corollary to the discovery that Christ is not absolutely identical with Jesus. For Christians, Jesus is the means through which we gain access to salvation. He is the way that leads to the Father (God, salvation, fullness, realization), a way that is authentic life itself (Jn 14:6). Christians in general believe that Jesus is also the life for others. They must, however, acknowledge that they do not know how this is, because this Jesus does not appear in this way in the eyes of others. The latter often have a very vague idea of who He might be and no interest in being saved by Him, for they admit that salvation is a notion sufficient for expressing the different homeomorphic equivalents concerned with the meaning and

NINE SOTRA 257

end of human life. Should Christ save them, He would do so only in an anonymous way. This is the first consequence, on which I have already commented, of the fact that Christians do not possess an exhaustive knowledge of Christ.

Another consequence is that the figure of Christ has been forged almost exclusively in dialogue with Mediterranean cultures. This is why I sometimes use provoactive language and speak of the tribal Christology that has prevailed for the past two thousand years of Christian history, and that has been almost exclusively centrered on its own interests, accompanied by a sad indifference to other human experiences. What has been practiced has been a Christology for private use (ad usum nostrorum tantum)—that is, for the internal use of Christians, perhaps even for aiding to conquer the world. "Who do men say is the son of man?" Jesus asked (Mt 16:1–3). The first Christian generations opened themselves to a dialogue with Syrians, Persians, Ethiopians, Greeks, Romans, and even "barbarians." "But once they developed an answer, they ceased referring to the other civilizations with which they came into contact. Instead, they created the Congregatio de propaganda fide in 1622 and diffused only their own answer. They did not imitate their Teacher by asking once again, "Who do the people"—the Buddhists, the Hifnaus, the Africans—"say the son of man is?"

The majority of scholars today agree that for about two chousand years Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, was a tribal God, one among many others, often more powerful or in any event equally cruel. A long and painful evolution was necessary, above all with the help of the great prophets of Israel, to convert the Hebrews' tribal God into the God for all and of all. The task of Christians—perhaps our kairos—may be the conversion—yes, conversion—of a tribal Christology into a Christophany less bound to a single cultural current.

I would like to pay homage to the idea of tribe. Westerners have attributed to ti, and to so many words that refer to different civilizations and religions, a certain contemptuous meaning. To begin with, tribe is more primordial than the idea of a people. The idea behind tribe is not just ethnic. Christian ethnocentrism is on the way to becoming transcended, at least in theory. But the tribal vision has more profound roots. It is neither a strictly biological entity like the family nor purely political like the state; it is eminently historical and telluric—even chthonic, and relaxed to the underworld. Here we encounter a very important and delicate problem. Although a tribal Christology is not necessarily completely illegitimate, Christophany cannot be reduced to ti.

When I say that history is the modern myth of the West, I am not asserting that history is a "myth" in the all-too-common meaning of the word, but that historical events are seen as the horizon in which the real is manifested in such a way that the historical Jesus is identified with the real Jesus. If Jesus of Nazareth were not a historical personage, He would lose all His reality.

<sup>16</sup> The Goths, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and other European "immigrants" were all called "barbarians" by the Romans. What these people called a "migration," Romans called an "invasion".

258 CHRISTIANITY

Christophany does not contest the historicity of Jesus. It merely affirms that history is not the only dimension of the real and that Christ's reality is thus not exhausted with Jesus's historicity.

Christophany's transcendence of historical Christology belongs to the cultural moment in which we live.

Before our so-called modernity—centered in an anthropocentric ontology and concentrated on epistemological problems—emerged, traditional Christology did not ignore the role of Spirit even though, inevitably, it expressed itself within a Prolemaic cosmovision. Once the Copernican cosmography, in which there was no place for angels and spirits—and not even for God, who at most may be a rranscendent engineer on sabbatical leave—prevailed, Christ's cosmic and universal function was reduced to the human world, and this became identified with the history of humankind. This is evident even in Varican II, which did not wish to be either antimodern or anti-Semiric (problems that the church urgently needed to confront). But that council did not know how to overcome the parameters of the Enlightenment [rationality]. The council, therefore, presented the church as "the people of God" in imitation of the "chosen people of Yahweh," Israel, The cosmovision of the council thereby effectively forgot the angelic and cosmic dimension of reality and ignored the perspectives of other cultures. We should remember that. according to the most ancient tradition, accepted without question until Peter Lombard's In IV Sententias (II, d.9, c.6), Christ redeems even the fallen angels. Similarly, the "restoration of everything in Christ" (the apokatastasis panton of Ac 3:21), the "recapitulation" (anakephalaiosis) of everything in Christ (Ep 1:10), and other great affirmations of Scripture speak to us of a cosmic Christ, the alpha and omega of the whole divine adventure of reality. Nor should we forget that Jesus's life was a constant battle with devils, that He remained in the desert with animals and angels (see, e.g., Mk 1:13), and that the first thing He did after the resurrection was to "descend into hell" (Denz., 16: 27-30 and passim in the Creeds).17

The legitimate preoccupation with not breaking totally with Jesus's Hebrew roots and not abandoning monotheism—because the alternative of a "pagan polytheism" was considered even worse—led to the reduction of Christ to a universal Messiah and a special son of God. Although the concept of the Trinity was a necessary premise for understanding the incarnation, the trinitiarian experience did not enter into common Christian experience—with some laudable exceptions in every period.

The shift in our cosmovision has brought it about that several traditional Christological assertions, such as extra eccletium nulla salut (outside the church there is no salvation), came to be considered sectration and narrow. Platonic and Netoplatonic influences on Christian thought lent themselves to commentaries, in a monotheistic (Jn 1:1) and non-Christic-Trinitarian framework, on John's revelatory phrase that everything has come to be through him (the Logos)" (Jn 1:3). In this way, inspired by St. Augustine, Aquinas could write in Contra gentes IV.13: "Ferbum Dei est ratio

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See Doré (1990), 558-62. See commentaries on 1 Pet 3:19 and Ep 4:9.

Nine Sūtra 259

omnium rerum" (God's word is the principle of all things), although for him this "principle" (ratio) refers not to the existing things of this world but to the rationes atternate (the cernal ideas) in God's mind—because the idea (ratio) was considered more real than the thing itself. Christ is thus split in two, as an intra-Trinitarian Logos and the descent of this Logos into time and space—with consequent metaphysical difficulties for a God understood to be "Absolute Being" (or as "being itself" [Ipsum esse]). All these ideas were advanced despite the clear assertions of many councils (see Denz., 301–2, 317ft). St. Thomas finds himself compelled to say that in the incarnation it is not so much that God becomes man as that this man (I tesus) becomes God.

It is significant that the concept of the mystical body of Christ has been forgotene. 

18 The reason is obvious. Monotheism fears that the incarnation might lead
to pantheism. If a human body is capable of being divine, it must be treated in a
particularly exceptional way. While the field of the logos unfolds itself chiefly in
history, spirit also transcends the temporal sphere. For human beings, the logos as
both word and ratio requires temporal succession—componendo et dividendo ((time
for) bringing together and dividing), Thomas would say—before talk of induction
and deduction with respect to the method of reason. Pneuma, on the other hand,
the functioning of spirit, does not seem as bound to the flux of history.

Although Mary's fiat was a historical event, the conception by the Spirit had no need of time, even though it took place in time. Instead it belongs to another level of reality. Similarly, the "today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43), which the "good thief" heard from the lips of the Crucified One, annulled and transcended in an instant the thief's entire historical past, and his entire negatination and the resurrection were historical events, but their actual reality (Wirklichkeit) is irreducible to either history or a memory of these facts. In short, for Christophany, speaking of the so-called preexistent Christ is not a happy formulation, for the "Only Begotten" is also the "First Begotten." Once we understand that, from the very beginning, Christophany constitutes a Christian vision. In the following sitns we shall treat some fundamental points that have their origin in tradition, while deepening it.

### 6. The Protological, Historical, and Eschatological Christ Is a Unique and Selfsame Reality, Distended in Time, Extended in Space, and Intentional in Us

The doctrine of Christ's unity constitutes the fulcrum of the Christian tradition. There are not three Christs—one the *creator* who has made all things (Gn 1:3); the second the *redeemer*, or a Second Adam, who redeems some elect persons, or the whole human race, or the entire universe (according to different theologies) from slavery, sin, *autoly*, assnatars; nor third, the *glorifier*, who brings all things to their total divinization (1 Co 15:28).

<sup>18</sup> See the valuable studies of Mersch (1933; 1949).

For this reason the Christian tradition does not separate the understanding of Christ from that of creation, on the one hand, nor that of the Trinity, on the other. Christ is not just the savior; He is also the creator. Christ is not a divine meteorite: He is one of the Trinity. Christophany makes sense only within a Trinitarian vision, since it is in Christ that we find the full manifestation of the Trinity. "Per ipsum, cum ipso, et in just?" (Through Hin, with Him, and in Him).

From outside such a vision we have only a "microdoxic" conception of Christ's mystery. In it He is reduced to a more or less divinized personage or an abstract Gnostic principle. Starting from their respective points of view, we may say that Judaism is right in considering the incarnation of Yahweh an absurdity; Islam, in seeing the incarnation of Allah as blasphemous; and many other religions in considering the doctrine of Christ sa meaningless or imperialist.

From a modern secularized point of view, prevalent today among the dominant classes of society in both East and West, the figure of Christ is interpreted as a more or less "scientific" phenomenon—that is to say, as something more or less observable in its historical singularity and its repercussions in communities of so-called believers, especially in the past but likewise also in the present. Some believe in the phenomenon; others do not. Polite people respect the private beliefs of each other person so long as "real" life—the world of work, economics, and politics—is developed independently of the ideas that both believers and nonbelievers enterctain about this Christ. In a word, at most the prevalent cosmology may accept an abstract philosophy and theology completely torn from daily life. Collective "religious" phenomena are seen as sociological manifestations of the remnants of superstition and undeveloped, primitive beliefs, or perhaps even a challenge that science will have to resolve in the future. Modernity can believe only in a Deus stiesus (a remote, uninvolved God), as Mircea Eliade has so ably pointed out.

What I am saying is that the vision we have of Christ necessarily depends on a determinate cosmovision. Much of modern Christology has accepted, in a generally uncritical way, the reigning cosmology and endeavors to present a "believable Christ" to what it calls "modern man." One of the shocks provoked by liberation theology occurred when it convinced many that the poor are a privileged locus theologicus (source for theological reflection). It would be opportune to recall not only that the poor have less money but also that they often exhibit a different mind-set and live in a different cosmovision, closer to that of an earlier time.

As a challenge to this modern world, it would be appropriate to remember a certain traditional cosmovision by recalling our first stitra: "Christ is the Christian symbol for the whole of reality." We should, however, first reflect on the vocabulary employed, since every word is pregnant with meaning within a specific cultural context.

For example, in this sixth sūtra I have, though with some reluctance, called Christ creator, redeemer, and glorifier. The three words are in fact ambiguous and bear a potential for connotation that today may obscure the primordial intuitions that inspired them. We must know the context in which they were used and change them appropriately when the context is changed. Christ as creator constitutes an

Nine Sūtra 261

abuse of language within a rigid monotheism, where God alone is creator. The word "redemption," as the Victorines and Scotists noted, suggests an almost sadistic theory of Christ's salvific action. Perhaps we should find another word. "Glorification" reflects an imperial theocratic vision, and "divinization" is equally unacceptable within a strict monotheism. To introduce new words might lead some to think that we wish to break with tradition. To continue to use the same terms requires complex qualifications and could generate confusion. To find a middle way is the task of wisdom. For the moment, a simple mentioning of the problem must suffice.

In any event, let us return to our stitrat. While always mediated by our personal interpretation, human experience discloses a threefold tension in our consciousness of reality. First, we feel ourselves distanded in time. Our human consciousness is temporal, our life is not lived wholly in an instant but rather runs along a temporal path, howsoever that may be interpreted—straight, linear, tirculatt, spiral, and so on. Our experience of the world shows that everything of which we are conscious is temporal: the world is a saeculum, an interval of time, an eon. The distension of time pervades everything, every being. Yet we also note that everything is connected, that there is also something that is not distended—without time or full of time, immanent or transcendent as it might be. Eternity is neither a simple concept nor anything posttemporal. The infinite is not only a mathematical entity nor reducible to a limit concept.

Second, we are conscious that everything that exists—that is to say, everything—is extended in space, corporeal, and has parts. The universe, including ourselves, is a material place. Reality is spatial and material. I five abstract matter from reality, reality collapses. Yet we also experience a fugitive intuition—at times, only a suspicion—that there is something "more" than matter. Spirit is not a pure concept. Distance itself is something that is not corporeal—it exists between bodies.

Third, we are also conscious of our intentional nature—striving and purposeful. Everything in us tends toward something more or something else. We are in epektasis, as the Cappadocian Fathers say, projected ahead, with an intentionality that is not only epistemic but likewise ontic. There is "a" transcendence, although we do not know where; we cannot know it; we only know that it is outside us. There is in us a "tending," a tension toward the whole that makes us intentionally a microcosm and in the last analysis a mikroithess. Aristotle wrote that "the human soul is in a certain sense all things" (De Anima III.8, 431b21).

Where do we come from? Where are we are going? What are we? These are the fundamental questions men and women have raised from time immemorial. They arise from the constitutive intentionality that drives us to investigate precisely that which is unknown.<sup>19</sup>

To sum up, although we are temporal, we know we are also "more"—eternal. Although we are spatial, we know we are "more"—spiritual. Although we are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> This has been discussed since Socrates. See the Buddhist criticism of these ultimate questions as well as the Upanishads *Praśna* and *Kena*.

conscious, we know we are capable of always knowing "more"—infinite. We are suspended between being and nothingness.<sup>20</sup>

Unless the figure of Christ is to be reduced to the level of a private devotion, Christophany must deal with these fundamental human questions. The classical Christian answer consists in elaborating Christ's triple function as creator, savior, and glorifier. And although the triple action has been attributed, respectively, to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, it has likewise been underscored that we cannot compartmentalize any divine action. Unless Christ is a dead symbol, all three actions refer to Him.

There is no need to interpret these ideas within an obsolete cosmovision. Our intention is not to defend or criticize any cosmology or Christology whatsoever, but simply to note that a Christopany for our age must raise these questions and that the past already offers us enough connecting ideas so that we need not break with tradition. Nevertheless, let us repeat that Christophany is neither pure exegesis nor archaeology.

If the eschatological Christ, for example, tells us nothing about the physical trute of the earth, if it tells us nothing about what I have called "ecosophy," He fails to enlighten us on a vital problem. Athens may have nothing to do with Jerusalem—recalling Tertullian's famous phrase—but Christ has to deal with both, as well as with mother earth. In a word, ecology (science of the earth) is a problem that also belongs to Christophany and in its light becomes "eco-sophy" (wisdom of the earth, nor just our wisdom of the earth).

Although history must not be neglected, neither may Christ's historical role be ignored. Christ's reality is not limited to saving souls, making them, so to speak, ascend to heaven. Christ's full reality cannot be split into three nor reduced to one function. Christ is the Only Begotten and First Begotten, Mary's son and son of Man, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega; this is why His reality transcends the categories of substance and individuality, as well as other concepts that need to be reexamined, like those of creation and redemption.

A spiritual comment may help us understand what such a Christophany accentuates. Our fidelity to and love of Christ do not alienate us from our kindred—which
includes angels, animals, plants, the earth, and of course, men and women. Christ is
a symbol of union, friendship, and love, nor a wall that separates. Jesus is certainly a
sign of contradiction, not because He separates us from others but rather because He
heals our hypocrisies, fears, and egoism, while leaving us as vulnerable as Himself.
Instead of rejecting others because they are pagan, nonbelievers, sinners—whereas
we are righteous and justified—Jesus impels us toward others and makes us see the
negative that is in us, too. Insofar as we share love, sympathy, suffering, and joy with
all our neighbors, we discover the true face of Christ that is in all of us. You have
done it to me" (Mr. 25:40) is no simple moral exhortation to do good; it is rather an
ontological assertion of Christ's presence in the other, in every other, in the smallest
of the small—not for the purpose of discovering an "other" hidden in the neighbor

<sup>20</sup> See Panikkar (1972a), 109-13; Nishitani (1982), 77-118 and passim.

NINE SŪTRA 263

but in order to discover the neighbor as part of ourselves. In fact, neither those on the right nor the left are conscious of the presence of Christ (Mt 25:37) because what matters is the human face of the neighbor.

This explains my refusal—as a Christian—to belong to a simple religious sect that has existed on its own for only two thousand years. On this point, too, the Christian tradition sustains us. As St. Augustine said, the Christian religion is traceable to the dawn of humanity (Retractationes 1.12). "Ecclesia ab Abel" (the church since Abel) is an ancient Christian belief.

Precisely because religion, in the best sense of the word, is the most profound human dimension that "binds" (religa) us to the rest of reality through its most intimate constitutive bonds, it is not reducible to an exclusive belonging to any particular human group. On the contrary, it is precisely the conscious belonging to reality that makes us Christians and happens precisely through a very concrete bond by means of which we are not only fully human but also fully real, although in a contingent and limited way. It is within and through this concereness that we are able to realize, to the extent of our limitations, the fullness of our being—as microcosm and mikrothess. This situra opens the way to further considerations, which we have already developed in the previous sections.

We should also remember that creation is continuous (creatio continua, as the Scholastics say), not something that happened "at the beginning of time"—a phrase that makes no sense, since "beginning" is already temporal. It is not a simple cosmological assertion as to where to place the big bang. Creatio is at the basis of all temporal existence, the foundation on which time—the concrete time of every instant—rests. Time is not an absolute "before" of things but a constitutive element of every single thing.

The protological Christ, at times improperly called preexistent, is one with and the same as the historical Christ, and the historical Christ is inseparable from the eucharistic and resurrected Christ. The Eucharist, we have said, is the continuation of the incarnation and so makes it possible for us to speak of an incarnatio continua.

In an analogous sense, the eschatological Christ, in His last coming or parousia, is inseparable from the eucharistic and risen Christ. Hence the "second coming" is neither another incarnation nor a second appearance of Christ. We have been warned not to believe in any appearance of the Messiah that might be reported here or there. The kingdom does not artive at a specific moment, nor can we say when it comes (Lk 17:20–24). All this does not deny the reality of time; on the contrary, it places time on two powerful pillars—the beginning and the end. Since neither the one nor the other is temporal, they are neither pre- nor postermporal but rempiernal. These columns sustain every temporal moment. The particular judgment and the universal judgment, to use the language of the catechism, coincide. There is no waiting when we leave time.

It is in this sense that Christophany helps us to live consciously our tempiternal life, the fullness of a life that has integrated past, present, and future (the *trikāla* of certain Indic traditions) so that we may live in fullness (Jn 10:10).

# 7. The Incarnation as Historical Event Is Also Inculturation

Some theologians have expressed fear that this Christophany would make the Christ of history disappear in the clouds of a non-Christian Gnosticism. Nothing could be further from the intention of this work, even though I have often criticized the implicit "historiolatry" of a certain kind of theology. History in the concrete is o important as to justify this seventh sūtra, whose truth is often neglected when one thinks about the geographical expansion of Christianity. As a historical act in time and space, the incarnation is also a cultural event, intelligible only within a particular religiocultural context, that of a specific history. The divine incarnation as such is not, however, a historical even but a divine Trinitarian act. The Only Begotten is also the First Begotten, as we have stressed repeatedly. The incarnation is the total reality of the Logos. That "mystery hidden for centuries in God' (Ep 3.9?, Col 1:26) has "manifested itself [θανερωθέντος; phanerôthentos] at the end of the ages" (1 Pet 1:20), "in the fullness of time" (Ep 1:10), in the historical Christophany of lesus, Mary's son.

History must not be absolutized. It is significant to note that, when the helicentric system (known since Aristarchus of Samos in the third century BC) was accepted, not only was the earth no longer considered the center of the universe, but the angels, demons, and spirits, which constituted parts of that cosmovision, began to vanish, and Christ began to lose His cosmic function—which had been obvious in the canonical Scriptures—as center of the entire universe (Ep 1:21; Col 2:10). After this, humankind found itself at the margin of physical reality and consoled itself that it possessed those mental powers that had created the world of history. Although our salvation does occur in history, it is not a historical fact. "Salvation history" (Heilsgeschichte) is neither the salvation of history nor the historical salvation of humanity but the historical sequence of events in which salvation occurs—not salvation itself, which is not a historical event.

A "sociology of knowledge" would explain the tension internal to the history of Christianity that became conscious of itself only with the fall of colonialism—to which must be added the fact that the colonialist ideology has taken refuge in the presumption that modern science is universal and culturally neutral. The essence of colonialism, in fact, consists in the conviction that one single culture is sufficient to embrace and understand the whole spectrum of human experience. Christianity had allied itself with this mentality or perhaps simply contributed to its consolidation. The moment we do not believe, at least in theory, that one single culture is humanity's ideal destiny, we cannot defend Christianity's claim to universality without emancipating ourselves from the culture with which it has lived in a symbiotic relationship for more than fifteen centuries.

We can speak, then, of Christianity's inculturation—that is, of its right to graft itself onto the different cultures of the world inasmuch as it is considered a "supercultural" fact. But it is precisely here that the internal tension arises. If Christianity Nine Sūtra 265

is in essence historical and bound to a historical current of humanity, it cannot claim that Jacob's sons or Shem's grandchildren represent the whole of human history. Alongside Abraham's children there are other human brothers and sisters. Hence a contradiction arises: we cannot say that Christianity is historical and not historical at the same time. We cannot pretend that Christianity is a gift for everyone if at the same time it is essentially bound to a determinate history. Such a history can be made universal only by eliminating the children of Cain, Ishmael, and Esau—to remain within the biblical world.

The "evolutionistic" mentality of modern cosmology makes plausible the belief that the whole of humanity is journeying toward one single point in history, which has been called the "omega" point. In this framework other cultures find themselves "on the way to developing"—and of course Christianity and scientists are already on the right road. This is the soteriology that we do not accept.

Judaism considers itself a historical religion and the people of God, although it has never pretended to be universal. Christianity, on the other hand, has claimed in recent centuries to be historical and universal at the same time.

While not historical, the incarnation is also an event that has in fact occurred in history and, as such, radically changed the sense of how Christians perceive history. But to proceed from this fact in order to assert that Christians are the new people of Israel—apart from the well-grounded criticism expressed by Judaism—is to leap across an abyss. The crisis in the Jewish religious consciousness after the atrocities of Nazism is well known. How could "the people of God" be exterminated? The belated acknowledgment that Christians have their share of responsibility for the horrors of the Holocaust is surely praiseworthy, but it is surprising that the Christian consciousness did not suffer the same crisis after 45 million African slaves were sacrificed for the economic benefit of Christian peoples. The Hebrew Bible's God is the God of history, while the Christians' Christ has been, rather, a victim of history.

Insofar as it has happened in history, the incarnation is certainly an event irretrievable in time—in linear time. We can only remember it, commemorate it. Christophany is not only a Christology that seeks to interpret the historical facts of Jesus of Nazareth. It seeks above all to accept critically "the mystery that has appeared, been manifested, and now revaled" (βανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν βρλιπετόthentos de num [Rom 16:26]) with every cognitive means at human disposal. From the very beginning, this mystery was "in the Father's bosom" (Jn 1:18) and thus, like Jesus's statement that He was 'before Abraham' (Jn 8:28), it is neither historical nor temporal.

Here we see clearly delineated a twofold dimension of Christianity that a dualistic vision of reality has difficulty keeping in harmony, despite the fact that nonduality is the quintessence of Christ's mysterty—fours Deus et totus homo (the whole God and the whole man) according to the classical expression. An inevitable consequence of this "panhistorical" vision of Christianity would be that the Eucharist cannot be Christ's real and true presence, but only an anamnesis (memory) of a past fact. In other words, without a mystical vision, the eucharistic reality disappears.

The incarnation as historical event cannot be considered a universal human facules we reduce men and women to simple historical beings and history to an exclusive human group whose mission would be to swallow up all other groups—with the pretension of saving them. Such an attitude is in keeping with a certain doctrine that defends the thesis that outside this particular group there is no salvation. All of this is certainly coherent, although it does undermine the very meaning of the incarnation, which consists in the divinization of the entire flesh, both as a return to the original state and the final completion of creation. The exclusively historical conception of the incarnation has certainly been enfleshed in the monarchical and imperialistic idea that has been the dominant ideology of Europeans throughout at least the lass is millennia.

The intelligibility of the incarnation as historical event depends on a particular series of cultural premises proper to the vision of the Abrahamic world. Precisely for this reason we must reconsider the presumed right to inculturation that a certain contemporary theology of mission advances, as if the incarnation were a fact that, being above culture, had the right to inculturate itself in every civilization. The very idea of incarnation represents a cultural revolution. The reaction of Hindu fundamentalism, for example, with respect to the adoption of Indian costumes on the part of Christain missionaries—however incorrect it may seem to some—is in fact justified: we cannot wear clothing and practice forms of ritual that do not belong to us. Jesus was not a Hindu samphism, nor the angel Gabriel a deva. If those historical events that have given rise to Christianity claim relevance for other cultures, they need to demonstrate their transhistorical validity. Otherwise, they will be interpreted as another, perhaps more peaceful, colonial invasion. A certain type of Christology finds it difficult to refute this objection.

We are not defending either a cultural or an intellectual solipsism or a vision of a compartmentalized humanity. Osmosis and symbiosis are not only physical or biological but also human and cultural events. We are simply calling attention to problems that a contemporary Christophany cannot avoid. Perhaps it would be better to speak here of reciprocal interculturation and fecundation.<sup>21</sup>

Here is an example of the incarnation's historical-sociological implications among those who feel themselves furthest from Christianity. In certain North American academic circles one can see a return—with repercussions elsewhere—to the most bigored Christian colonialism, along with the good intention of overcoming it. It has been suggested that the terminology of the Western calendar, Christian in origin, be replaced by one that presumably would be neutral and universal. It is understandable that some would protest the use of AD (anno Domini), but by eliminating BC (before Christ) and substituting BCE (before the Common Era), scholars betray the depths of the cultural impact of the historico-Christian event. After all, Jesus was not born in the year 1. We select a single event but without any value iudgement. To call our age "the Common Era", even though for the Jews, the

<sup>21</sup> Panikkar (1991).

Nine Sütra 267

Chinese, the Tamil, the Muslims, and many others it is not a common era, constitutes the acme of colonialism.

Christianity too is a cultural construct, inextricably bound to Western history and culture. No Christoology is universal, and one aspect of Christophany consists in its being conscious of that fact in confronting the problem of Christ's identity.

We face two options. Either this culture, for which the historical Christian incarnation is meaningful, must become a universal culture—with the many other cultures reduced, so to speak, to folklore. Or we must realize that Christophany itself is pluralistic, which means there can be no univocal Christophanic concept. Hence Christophany does not belong to the order of logos, though we must not ignore the Logos's exigencies. In other words, "logomonism" is a philosophical reductionism—and, let us add, a heresy. Once again, the Trinity provides the key. Although inseparable from the Logos, the Spirit is not the Logos. In the Trinity, equality and difference mean that there is nothing superior and external that allows us to say in what it is that the "persons" are equal or different. The Trinity is pure relationality.

Let me try to clarify this. Christianity is a historical religion. If we abolish history, we destroy Christianity, But Christ, the Christ in whom historical Christianity clains to believe, is more (not less) than a historical reality, in the sense in which Semitic culture has understood history. The fact that in Hindu India the experience of the Christian Christ is perceived more in the sacrifice of the Eucharist than in the story of Bethlehem is a sign of this problem.

A pluralistic Christophany does not mean that a plurality of possible Christoolgies exists. This is, rather, a fact. But pluralism is not synonymous with plurality. A
pluralistic Christophany challenges the reductio ad unum (reduction to uniformity),
considering it an exigency of the intellectual logos—while Christophany properly
os-called is not reducible to logos. Christophany includes pneuma, spirit. The two
are inseparable and irreducible. In other words, Christophany does not limit itself
to the identification of Christ but aims at reaching some understanding of His
identity. And this, as we have already seen, recuires the mystical vision, the third eve.

At this point we discover an extremely important corollary. A realistic Christophany cannot avoid political problems. From the time of Pontius Pilate, such problems are inherent in an understanding of Christ, since He is not a politically neutral figure. He challenges us to make decisions—to choose a side. But He reminds us that a side is only a side. After twenty centuries of history in which we have seen Christ's assertions used to defend the most opposed ideas—from the Crusades to just war theory to total pacifism—our Christophany should be more cautious and mature. To begin with, it should understand that cultural factors, with all their limits and ambivalences, are inherent in every Christophany insofar as they are bound up with the very fact of the incarnation. Tertullian, Basil, Augustine, Luther, Comenius, Mintzet—to cite only a few names—were all Christians who invoked Jesus's words to justify their diverse and sometimes incompatible positions. Despite the indubitably acute intelligence and good will of the great theological geniuses of the past, the figure of Jesus Christ seems to induce them to make contradic-

tory statements insofar as they underwent different experiences. Christophany is pluralistic: Christ, it appears, *has* appeared as king, soldier, knight, pacifist, friend of the poor, rebel, and madman.

The first lesson to draw is the insufficiency of simple exegesis. We know that the devil can quote the Scriptures to his own advantage. More than a question hermeneutical caution, we recognize the correctness of the adage, "The letter kills." Like the Vedic religion, Christianity is not a religion of Scripture but of the word. "From hearing [Sruti in Sanskrit] comes faith" (Rom 10:17), despite the fact that a narrow exegesis tells us that the original meaning was different.

Our sūtra takes a step forward: it does not simply state that Christ's epiphanies exhibit many aspects and that they are psychologically and historically conditioned. It also tells us that the incarnation itself, as a historical event, has taken place within a specific cultural milieu. The effect is twofold: the incarnation is already an inculturation and can therefore be received only within a certain culture. At the same time, it profoundly transforms the culture that receives it. The Bethlehem event that is grafted onto Semitic culture changes it radically.

The consequence is obvious: no such thing exists as an absolute Christophany, since Christophany is not a logical corollary of a purely deductive theology. A "chemistally pure" Christology from which we can deduce Christian ideas and a Christian praxis does not exist. No Christian life, no Christian theology, and in our case, no Christophany is the conclusion of a syllogism. Jesus Christ Himself warned us the Would become a "sign of contradiction" (semion antilegemenon, Lk 2:34).

This does not mean, however, that we cannot invoke Christ in our support, or that we must renounce a Christophany that would be convincing for our time—for example, one that favors the oppressed. It means only that we cannot absolutize our interpretations and enthrone a particular Christology with universalist pretensions. This would entail reducing the mystery of Christ to our categories. The Son of man bears many names because no name exhausts the one named. We should distinguish experiential Christianness from cultural Christianity and doctrinal Christendom.<sup>22</sup> The problems remain open.

We encounter an example of this inculturation in the history of the so-called theology of liberation. It represents proof of the vitality of theology, such that it resists the caution of the so-called official churches. The picture of Christ most convincing in the concrete consciousness is that which represents Him as the Jesus of the oppressed making us aware of the institutionalized violence of this, our new world.

Some theologians cry, "Jesus Christ is not God," in contrast to a Christianity spiritually detached from the world. Jesus Christ is certainly not Yahweh. Jesus Christ is the son of God, but we are also that—and all of creation is a Trinitarian adventure.

Such an opening is nor a simple concession to theoretical pluralism. It also implies not closing ourselves deterministically to the human adventure. Understood in the deepest and most traditional interpretation, under the inspiration of the Spirit (zim

<sup>22</sup> Panikkar (1994b), 201-18.

Nine Sütra 269

venia verborum), the Christian church may decide to remain the "little flock" (Lk. 12:32) different from the rest or the "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13) that flavors every-thing. The adventure of creation is also in our hands (Qo 3:11 in the Latin Vulgate interpretation). Human beings are not marionettes in the hands of God, Destiny, or Providence. Divine freedom is constrained by neither physics nor metaphysics, and we are cocreators of our own destiny, which is inseparable from that of the universe. It is in this that our dignity consists. The future depends on us, too (1 Co 3:9). Jesus confessed that He did not know all the secrees of the "kingdom" (Mk 13:32).

### 8. The Church Is Considered a Site of the Incarnation

The fact that the Reformation and Counter-Reformation have clashed almost exclusively in areas of socioecclesiological polemics has created an image of the church as something similar to a civil institution. In the first fifteen centruites, in contrast, Christians were virtually unanimous in believing in what today is called "the cosmic church" (the μυστήριον κοσμικόν τῆς ἐκκλησίας mystérion kosmikon the stellé shelf with a summersed in secular affairs that it considered sacred.

Vatican II (Lumen gentium, 1) underscores again this ampler understanding of the church, returning to the traditional notion of the church as μυστήριον τοῦ κοσμοῦ (mystērion tou kosmou) or the sacramentum mundi—that is, the mystery of the universe. With this affirmation, the church shows its consciousness of being the place where the Holy Spirit is active and thus an integrating element of the unique Trinitarian act of Christian faith: "I believe." This should suffice. But inasmuch as a person is self-conscious, one searches for a symbol adequate to this faith. This symbol is God—who is not an objective concept. In fact, this philosophy distinguishes between credere in Deum (that is, "believing in God"), credere Deum (i.e., "believing God exists"), and credere Deo se revelanti (i.e., "believing in God revealing Himself"). The expression in Deum opens us to the Trinitarian life-in God, Father, Son, Spirit. . . . And "holy church" here is in apposition to the Holy Spirit. One of the first creeds, after the active Eig (eis, "in" [God]), which expresses the dynamism of the act of Trinitarian faith, ends by saying that this assertion is made (εν τῆ ἀγία καθολικῆ ἐκκλησία; en të hagia katholikë ekklësia), "in the the holy catholic [universal] church" (Denz., 2). Already Lorenzo Valla, one of the first to turn from the Latin to the Greek text in order to overcome the split of the Middle Ages, proved that the mysterion of the New Testament was infinitely more profound and ample than the Latin sacramentum, understood as the global nature of the church's sacraments. That the church had existed "since Abel" (ecclesia ab Abel), the first human being born of woman, was virtually accepted as a foregone conclusion. The idea that God had created the world out of love for the church was considered virtually synonymous with the idea of the mystical body. This meant that God created the world for the purpose of divinizing His creation by making it become His own body, with Iesus as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> De Lubac (1953); Holböck and Sartory (1962); and H. Rahner (1964).

head and we the members. The church is understood as Christ's spouse, called to be "one single flesh" in the eschatological hieros gamos (sacred matrimony) at the end of time. "A quinas summarizes the traditional understanding of the church, saying, "Corpus Ecclesiae constituitur ex hominibus qui fuerunt a principio mundi usque ad finem ipsius" (The body of the church is constituted by the people who existed from the beginning of the world until its end [Sun. theol. III, q.8, a.3]).

For now it is sufficient to quote the church fathers and their insistence—as Clement of Alexandria says—on "the church of the firstborn," (ἐκκλησία πρωτο-όκων ἐκθιέτα prōtorokōn [see Heb 12:23]). In Tertullian's bold formulation, the church is "the body of the Trinity's three persons," and "wherever the three are, that is to say, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is the church which is the body of the three." (Ubi tres, id est Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, ibi ecclesia quae trium corpus est). <sup>25</sup>

When Origen (PG 12.841) and St. Cyprian (PL 4.503), toward the middle of the third century, formulated the celebrated statement extra ecclesiann nulla salus (Outside the church there is no salvation)—which found virtually universal acceptance until a short time ago—ecclesia was understood as locus salutis (the place of salvation), so that wherever salvation occurred, there was the church. "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church," maintained Ignatius of Antioch (Ad Smyrnaeos VIII.2; PG 5.713).

This cosmic and soteriological understanding is the primary meaning of the Greek word katholike—the church that coexists with the universe. It would be misleading to identify this church directly with an institution, as Pius XII made clear. Subsequent discussions concern the bond between this ecclesia, this universal community, within which salvation occurs, and the juridical Roman church, between the visible church and its invisible boundaries. Contemporary ecclesiological disputes belong to a different order altogether.

To reduce the church to a visible or official church or to a simple historical phenomenon would constitute a "microdoxic" interpretation. The church is the "spouse of Christ" or, as Irenaeus said, the place of the Spirit: "Where the Spirit is, there is the church." Here we face a question of terminology. Some theologians criticize the conception according to which the church would be the continuation of the incarnation. If by church is understood an institution or even the living visible organism (and not just the organization), then these theologians are fully justified in criticizing a neo-Romanic mystiem. The distinction between "church" and "kingdom" is also well known. It is clear that we cannot escape the "politics" of terminology. However, while I agree with the criticism of pseudo-mysticism. I still believe that the concept of ecclesia also includes the universal exchaption." My

<sup>24</sup> H. Rahner (1964).

<sup>25</sup> Tertullian, De Baptismo VI, cited in de Lubac (1953), 30. See Col 1:18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Mühlen (1968), 173-216.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See Mühlen's important contribution of 1966.

Nine Sõtra 271

formulation of the problem does not climinate an ecclesiology that is more sociological than theological, but it does not accept any "fundamentalist" conception of church. What it does seek to do is reach a level at which communication with other cultures and religions becomes possible.

To sum up: Salvacion consists in reaching our plenitude—that is, in sharing the divine nature, since nothing finite can ever satisfy the being that is capax Dei. Humanity and all of creation are capable of reaching that fullness because, at the very root of "creation," we find the mediator, the bond. Christ. Generated by the "source and origin of the whole of divinity," not only does Christ create everything but He divinizes everything by the grace of the divine Spirit, so that, after the spatio-temporal adventure of creation, the divine life of the Trinity will pervade everything and God will be all in all (1 Co 15:28). What we are describing is a God that is as transcendent as immanent, therefore irreduced to a Trinity ab intra (from within).

In the meantime, as long as we are pilgrims, as long as the whole of creation goans in the pains of childbirth, we remain immersed in the process until the full revelation of the children of God will be manifested (Rom 8:19-23). The place in which this process occurs is the church; it is also realized in the "visible church" despite all her human shadows and sins. The church is the very place in which the whole universe pulsates until its final destiny. Man is the priest, the mediator in that cosmic-divine battle—the daitsistemm of India's (recapitualton) of all things in Christ (Ep 1:10), to which Man is called, a creature who, though ontologically inferior to the angels, has a higher task to fulfill precisely because of the divine paradox that chooses those things that are not in order to confound those that are (see 1 Co 1:26-31). To see in the word "church" only an institution is a residue of clericalism or an unhealed trauma.

With a fresh critical consciousness, Christophany returns to these fundamental rtuths: the place of the incarnation is Man, indeed "the flesh." The place of man is the earth, indeed the church in its journey. The goal of this pilgrimage is plenitude, not nothingness (not to be confused with emptiness). It is this that constitutes Christian hope. The human adventure is ecclesial, cosmic, and divine.

In order to grasp the profound meaning of this sūtra, we must recapture the Scholastic intuition of reatio continua, and extend it to incarnatio continua. We find timid hints of the latter in the writings of a few mystics, such as Maximus the Confessor and Meister Eckhart. In Just as God's creative activity in every moment takes nothing away but makes creation from the "beginning" stand our more profoundly, so the continuous incarnation of the Son in every creature does not diminish the central place of the incarnation of Jesus (Jn 1:14). Rather it allows us to become conscious of what was from the beginning (Rom 16:25–26; 1 Jn 1:1–3). It is here that the title of Son of man, which the Son of God gave Himself, reveals its innermost depth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> On Maximus, see von Balthasar (1961a), 274ff.; on Eckhart, see Wilke (1995), 237-48.

## 9. Christophany Is the Symbol of the Mysterium Coniunctionis of Divine, Human, and Cosmic Reality

The cosmic and Trinitarian aspect of the mystery of Christ does not obscure His historical reality, since the mystery of Christ resides precisely in this harmonious contiunctio. As Sr. Leo Magnus says in his Seventh Homily on the Nativity, Christ's equality with the Father does not come at the expense of His equality with us. His cosmic function does not climinate His historical role. If the lex orandi (the law of praying) is the lex oredendi (the law of believing), we may then discover how the Christian tradition has seen in Jesus Christ something more, not less, than a savior of souls. In fact, a great many liturgical texts constantly describe this polarity. Let us look at the eighth antiphon of the office of matins for the liturgy of January 1. There we sing.

Ante luciferum genitus et ante saecula Dominus Salvator noster hodie nasci dignatus est.

Our Lord the Savior, generated before the light and before the centuries, deemed worthy of being born today.

And in the seventh antiphon, is found

In principio, et ante saecula Deus erat Verbum, et ipse natus est hodie Salvator mundi

At the beginning and before the centuries was the Word, and he was born today, the Savior of the world.

The meaning is clear: Jesus was born a man among us. Both exast emphasize the word bodie (today), a transhistorical roday. The texts do not say that He was born olim (then, once upon a time) but roday. It is therefore not a simple commemoration but the celebration of something contemporary, today's new birth. The historical reality of Mary's son transcends time not only in a vertical divine direction (Only-Begotten Son of the Father) but likewise in a horizontal one. Hodie is neither ante sacula (before the ages, and by extension, before time began) nor in principio (in the beginning), outside of time, but as a temporal reality that is not limited to the historical fact that occurred twenty centuries ago. To repeat: If we forget either the mystical or the faith dimension, we deform the figure of Mary's son. This figure is as much human as it is divine and cosmic, belonging to the past, the present, and the future.

For centuries the liturgy has sung the praises of this figure in the Advent hymn at matins:

Nine Sūtra 273

Verbum supernum prodiens e Patris aeterni sinu qui natus orbi subvenis latente cursu temporis.

Supreme Word proceeding from God's eternal bosom; by being born you save the world when the passage of time falls away.

The entire cosmotheandric experience is implicit here—the divine, the human, and the world. Christ's function is not limited to "redeeming" humanity but embraces the restoration of the world; the cosmic mandala (both orbis and mandala mean circle).

"Whoever sees me sees the Father" (Jn 14:9). Jesus Christ is pure transparence, the Way. At the same time, whoever sees Jesus Christ sees the prototype of the complete Man, the totus home. Whoever discovers Jesus Christ experiences eternal life—that is, the resurrection of the flesh and therefore the reality of matter, of the cosmos (material universe). Jesus Christ is the living symbol of divinity, humanicy, and the cosmos. Whatever experience does not entail these three dimensions can hardly be called a living encounter with the young rabbi who one night rold Nicodemus that Man's new birth must spring out of water (matter) and the Spirit (Jn 3:5-6).

In Jesus Christ the finite and the infinite meet, the human and the divine are joined. In Him the material and the spiritual are one, and also the male and the female, high and low, heaven and earth, the historical and the transhistorical, time and eternity. From the historic-religious point of view the figure of Christ could be described as that of a person who reduces to zero the distance between heaven and earth, God and Man, transcendent and immanent, without sacrificing either pole—which is precisely the principle of Advaita. Jesus prayed, "That they be one" (Jn 17:21). The Copte Gospel of Thomas says, "When you make one out of two and make the internal the external . . then you will enter [into the kingdom]" (22). "Qui facis turraque unsum" (You who you make one of two), the great "O" antiphon of Christmas (sung on December 22) amplifies the scriptural meaning (Ep 2:14), and Peter spoke of the "apokatastaseis pantōm" (the restoration of all things) in Acts 3:21.

If, as we have said, we separate the figure of Christ from the Trinitarian mystery, we fail to grasp the meaning of Christophany. In this respect one may speak of the "adical Trinity" as a complement to the intuition of the unity between the immanent and the "economic" unity. The immanent Trinity would be God's mystery "within" (ab inna) the divine interiority, while the economic Trinity would be the action directed "externally" (ad extra), the "work of creation" (opus creationis), especially as it refers to humanity. After Tertullian this distinction became classical and was consecrated by the Christian consciousness, often because of the fear of falling into pantheism, as a famous thirteenth-century text asserts: "Inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitude notanda;" (Between

the creator and the creature no similarity can be noted without calling attention to the dissimilarity, which is greater [Denz., 806]).

To keep us from forgetting the Trinity, Karl Rahner formulated the thesis that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity"-and immediately added, "and vice versa." Some theologians criticize this "vice versa" because they hold that it contradicts the Lateran Council's affirmation cited above.29 Without entering into the heart of that discussion now, I would like to underscore again the difficulty that Western thought has experienced in admitting that an a-dualism could exist between monism and dualism. "The Father is equal to the Son," the Trinitarian doctrine asserts, because everything that the Father is He gives to the Son without holding anything back, yet the Son is not the Father; otherwise He would not be the Son, and the immanent Trinity would vanish. According to the Council of Toledo, "Quod enim Pater est, non ad se, sed ad Filium est; et quod Filius est, non ad se, sed ad Patrem est; similiter et Spiritus Sanctus non ad se, sed ad Patrem et Filium relative refertur: in eo quod Spiritus Patris et Filii predicatur" (What the Father is, He is not for Himself but for the Son, and what the Son is. He is not for Himself, but for the Father; in the same way the Holy Spirit does not refer to Himself but to the Father and the Son; therefore He is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son [Denz., 528]).

It is worth saying that the nondual Advaita to which I refer is neither a dialectical negation of duality nor a secondary act of the intellect—or perhaps better, the human spirit. Rather, it is a direct vision that transcends rationality (without denying it). I do not intend to say that duality comes "first" and is subsequently denied but that we see relationality immediately "before" any duality. In this sense we may also call it "non-unity." The constitutive relational nature of reality—or, better, its correlationality—cannot be characterized as either unity or duality. In fact, both the latter are no more than what human thought requires when it breaks out of the primordial silence from which it originates.

The way in which the radical Trinity manifests itself in Christ presents us with the nondualist unity between the divine and the human (the theandric mystery of Eastern theology). But the human being, too, constitutes a nondualist unity between spirit and body. Each of us is a nondualist unity between spirit and body, and each of us exists in the corporality proper to material things. The "three" (the "divine," the "human," and the "material") go together with neither confusion nor separation.

I have called this experience the *osmotheandric* or the *theanthropocosmic* intuition. At times this intuition has been misunderstood, as if it were a question of three substances. Again, Christ remains the central symbol. Christ is one, and not a union of 'three' elements, even though we can and must acknowledge this tridimensionality in Him, as well as in the whole of reality. It is enough to remember that the traditional vision of Jesus Christ has always recognized in Him the harmonious conjunction of these three dimensions of the real, even though every person accentuates now one, now the other element of the triad.

<sup>29</sup> See Forte (1985), 18-24.

Nine Sütra 275

Maximus the Confessor writes that in Christ the five great "conjunctions" are realized: the masculine with the feminine (Gal 3:28), the world of the damned with paradise (Lk 23:43); the terrestrial world with heaven (Ac 1:9-11), the sensible with intelligible things (Ep 4:10), created with uncreated nature.<sup>30</sup>

Rather than a coincidentia oppositorum, Jesus Christ has been described as the reconciliation between the divine and the universe, the one who has called upon those who believe in Him to act in "the service of reconciliation" (διακονία τῆς καταλλαγῆς diakonia τēs katallagēs [in 2 Co 5:18]). Thus, overcoming "otherness" could be experienced as the mysterium coniunctionis (the sacrament of conjunction), as the center of the cross as quaternitas perfecta (fourfold perfection). In fact, Christ is more the "conjunction" than "coincidence." For in Him all Christian teachings are conjoined." As we have said, creation cannot be separated from the incarnation, nor the incarnation from the Trinity.<sup>33</sup>

St. John Damascene emphasizes that we "do not have to say that man has become God but rather that God made himself man" (De fide orthodoxa III.2). This has been a great difficulty for monotheism. How can Being, absolutely one and simple, become anyone whatsoever? Let us repeat it again: The incarnation makes no sense except in the Trinity.

If we separate Jesus Christ from the Trinity, His figure loses all credibility. He would then be a new Socrates or any other great prophet. If we separate Jesus Christ from humanity, He becomes a Platonic ideal of perfection—and frequently an instrument for dominating and exploiting others by becoming a God. If we separate His humanity from His actual historical journey on this earth and His historical roots, we turn Him into a mere Gnostic figure who does not share our concrete and limited human condition.

The conjunction of these three elements constitutes the task of Christophany for our age.

<sup>30</sup> See von Balthasar (1961a), 271-72, for quotations.

<sup>31</sup> Scheeben (1941) developed this understanding in a profound way.

<sup>32</sup> See Sherrard (1992), 163.



## **Epilogue**

It is no surprise that a new period in world history should reflect a fresh understanding of Jesus the Christ. If Christ is to have any meaning for Hindus, Andines, Ibos, Vietnamese, and others who do not belong to the Abrahamic lineage, this meaning can no longer be offered in the garb of Western philosophies. Such an understanding can be achieved neither by a simple repetition not by a mere adaptation of traditional doctrines, but by a "new life in Christ," by the fides oculta (hidden faith) that never stops "looking at the heaven," as the men of Galilee did, but relives the incarnatio continua, with which the ancients were also familiar. The salutary re-action of a "Christology from below," such as liberation theology represents, must be complemented by a "Christology from within," which might at the same time serve as a bridge to a "Christology from above." All three forms are necessary, but this does not require us to wed an adoptionist Christology (God adopts Jesus as His son) or a pneumatic Christology (a divine spiritual being took on flesh at a particular point in history). At the beginning (of time) Jesus did not exist, but at the beginning (εν άρχη en archē), at the origin (tempiternal), was the alpha and omega that Christians call Christ.

Were I to label everything, I would speak of a Christophany from the center—not to be confused, however, with so-called Christocentrism. And let us remember that the "rule for praying is the rule for believing" (Lev orandi, Lev credendi) and that the liturgical hymns that express it were not only an exercise in poetic license but also represented theocosmological intuitions. Let us recall the ancient Christmas Vespers Hymn, first in Latin and then in English:

Jesu, Redemptor omnium, Quem lucis ante originem Parem Paternae gloriae Pater supremus edidit. Tu lumen et splendor Patris Tu spes perennis omnium.

Jesus, Redeemer of all things, who before light's origin equal to the fatherly glory, the supreme Father generated Thou, light and splendor of the Father,

Thou, eternal hope of all things.

Although the same hymn praises the day as currens per anni circulum (coursing through the cycle of the year), and the hymns of praise still call Christ beatus auctor saeculi (blessed creator of this world/age), in the modern Western world the general tendency has been to read such texts within a linear conception of time. In greater agreement with the great Christological texts of Scripture, we should read this hymn within a different temporal framework—from the beginning, at the origin (en arche; in principio), reality was (is) Father, Christ, Spirit (to use Christian names). When "the fullness of times" arrived, there occurred in space (and also in time) what we call the incarnation, so that the manifestation (φανέρωσις phanerosis) of Jesus constitutes a revelation of reality-of what we are. We should remember that, unless we wish to make God an anthropomorphic and composite being, the revelation of God can be only God Himself (not a simple production of His mind), God's logos. the Trinitarian intuition asserts, is God. The mystery of time is the unfolding—the distension, Augustine would say-of the Trinity ad extra. But "outside of" God nothing exists. The whole of reality is not an exclusively transcendent God: it is the Trinity.

Let us end with another hymn, this one from the monastic breviary for Matins during the Easter season, remembering that Augustine said, "Cantare amantis est," which can be roughly but correctly translated as "singing is what lovers do."

Ut hominem redimeres,
Quem ante iam plasmaveras
Et nos Deo coniungeres
Per carnis cantubernium

So that you may free man, whom you had already formed and unite us to God through your union with the flesh.

The greatness of the Christian vision, let us recall, does not take anything away from other intuitions of the ultimate mystery of reality. The Christian faith is confirmed when we find homeomorphic equivalences in other traditions. I call attention to a little-known hymn that comes from one of the most ancient documents—probably seventh century—of the Tibetan people:

From a divine son
Will rise a human race...
and a hero will dominate the world,
and his fame will spread over the earth...!

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Olschak (1987), 36.

EPILOGUE 279

We have repeated several times in these pages that the experience we have called Christophanic is a concrete form of living the human experience in its fullness. Many people today hesitate to accept this language either because it has been banalized or abused. We have tried to demonstrate that two millennia of human experience partake of our common patrimony and that we should neither relegate it to a museum nor accept it uncritically. My intention has been not so much to present the past from a new angle of vision as to live the present "in communion with the others," like all those pilgrims to whom we have dedicated this study.

The language of this book may disturb the experts in psychoanalysis and analogous disciplines. We should make clear that we admire those who have contributed to the investigation of the human soul in the last century; their contribution to the exploration of the human psyche is precious. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that their theories reflect the human spirit at the level at which we have treated it.

The reader is surely aware of our critical attitude toward contemporary culture, but this does not mean that I do not admit a secularized "original sin" that makes us speak of an "unhappy consciousness" (unglitich-liches Bewusstsein, in Hegel's phrase), or even an excessively complex or wrong conscience.

It is true that evil exists in the world and in Man; the divinization of which we have spoken does not mean a return to paradise. Indeed, such a "dream" seems like a monotheistic conception of divinization or an Apollonian idea of perfection. Human perfection does not have the character of a machine, nor human health that of an elephant. Man is not the same as the Platonic idea of Man. We should be grateful that psychology has dismanted the mirage of second innocence. But that does not require us to deny that our ultimate destiny is a leap from an instinctive animality to participation in the infinite adventure of reality. Even the Gospel is full of Jesus's battles against demons of all kinds.

In other words, Christophany is not an idyllic vision of either reality or the human condition but a phania, a light that appears as light insofar as we are wrapped in darkness. Perhaps those who are most sensitive to the human condition may be able to see Christophany as "good tidings." We began by describing the Sitz im Leben that gave birth to these reflections. We end by referring to another, broader Sitz; the social-political-economic-spiritual field of our overall human situation. What does a Christophany have to say to three quarters of those whom we call our neighbors and yet fail to achieve even a minimal level of humanity because of unjust human systems? The cry Pentervens, "we shall overcome," expresses a powerful psychological explosion, although for the millions of victims who perish along the way to an ever more problematic "promised land" it is either a pious wish or an alienating drug. We must go deeper and furnish an answer to the 'am had 'arretz, the dalit, the Amerindians, and all the oppressed—not only economically and politically, but also in a spiritual and human direction. We should constantly keep in mind all those who will not "succeed," who will not "succeed," who will not "succeed," who will not "succeed," who will not "survive."

Let us again employ poetic language, this time in the mouth of a Latin American Catholic bishop, Pedro Casaldáliga, who, in summing up the sorrows of the

Amerindian, provides a compendium of what I have been trying to say. It is perhaps in today's crèches that Christophany is best manifested.

From the Amerindia to Holy Mary, both in the state of Nativity.

Who says it was good news? And the child not yet fully born ...! The caravels of greed are panting and Herod shields himself in his power.

They opened me in the middle seeking money and they have broken the fire of my voice.

Can it be the God of life who is killing me?

This God, Guadalupe, can it be God?

Will the wind not know to come by my road? Will my blood not be good for His wine? Does the Kingdom not ferment in me as well?

In the slum of the empire and inconsolable, I offer you the poverty of the beaten one, which may be, finally, our Bethlehem.

The sociopolitical implications of this vision should be clear. Jesus Christ destroys all our dualisms. He is the one "qui fecit utraque unum" (who makes one from both), chants the liturgy as it echoes Scripture. Yet this unum is neither a philosophical monism nor a theological monotheism. We repeat: the δικαιοσύνη (diakaiosynė) of the Gospels does not mean "justification" (by heaven) on one side, and "justice" (on earth) on the other. "On earth as it is in heaven," the best-known Christian prayer says. The Son of Man is the Son of God. It is not the case that God is here, Man is there, and the Earth somewhere underneath. The spiritual and the celestial are not on one side, and the material and the political on the other; time is not now and eternity later; the isolated individual is not in opposition to the undifferentiated collectivity. Jesus was neither a political liberator nor an ascetic who denied the world, much less a member of the clergy, but simply a being (we do not have any other word) who lived the fullness of the human. What Jesus did was to participate in the affairs of the earth and the vicissitudes of men and women, while knowing that it is the obligation of each of us to assume our responsibilities so that the common effort will achieve a greater justice. But this human fullness also includes participation in the divine—thereby recalling what we are called to become.

Once again: Christ as pure God, even though the only Son of God, does not convince. He neither descended from the cross nor is He the God of history. Nor

EPILOGUE 281

does it help if we consider Him simply as a "man for others," a historical hero or marvelous model. Although once in a while David is lucky, there are innumerable occasions when it is Goliath who wins. Where do all revolutions lead us? The struggle for justice is not "justified" by an eventual victory (judged again in terms of linear time) but by the fact—I dare say while leaping to another tradition—that it is our human vocation—the lokasanggraba (the cohesion of the universe), as imaged in the Bhagavad-Gita (III.20, 25).

In other words, if the Mystery of Christ is not our very own, if Christophany as no more than the archaeology of the past or the eschatology of the future, it might as well be considered a museum piece. The cry for a new spirituality is a cry of the Spirit, which, according to tradition, is the very Spirit of Christ Himself. The Christophany of the third millennium must be neither sectarian nor a mere consolation for "believers." The Son of Man died outside the holy city.

The Christophany from within that we are timidly suggesting constitutes the deepest interiority of all of us, the abyss in which, in each one of us, there is a meeting between the finite and the infinite, the material and spiritual, the cosmic and the divine. The Christophany of the third millennium is a summons to us to live this experience.



## A FINAL WORD

έκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν.

Et de plenitudine ejus nos omnes accipimus.

From his fullness we have all received.

Jn 1:16

"In order that we may fill up the fullness of God in all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1 &</sup>quot;...ut implaamini in omnem plenitudinem Del," says St. Bonaventure in the prologue of his Sollloquies, citing Ep 3-19 (fva πληρωθήτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ, bina phròthete pan to pleröma tou theou), as Paul speaks of receiving the love of God so that "you may be filled with the fullness of God."



#### APPENDIX

# A Letter to My Bishop\*

My dear Bishop and Brother Patrick,

This letter is fruit of an act of faith. You are not the person who knows me best, nor the most ancient friend, nor with whom I have discussed my ideals in depth and length. I am writing it prompted by the Spirit, or simply by the desire to communicate to someone what I would like to say—and find that the most proper person is precisely my Bishop, with whom I have a sacramental link. Perhaps one can simply say that it is the principle of authority, but Christian authority is fruit of faith. I am full aware that our sacramental link (bishop-priest) is more than just a moral of uridical bond. I . . . ]

- [...] Thank you for the trust you show. I think you are doing the best thing in the circumstances by accepting the permanent post offered to you at California. You know how much I have desired that you have a permanent post in India, preferably in a seminar. But in the circumstances there is hardly a place where you could study in the way that you like. [...] (from the letter written on June 2, 1971, from Yaranasi)
- [...] As you rightly guess time is implacable and does not wait. So, I think that it is wise to let the ideas mature in prayer and further thought and penetrate also other spheres so that when undertaken anew the time is riper. Nothing is lost in the Mystical Body.
- I am convinced that we are witnessing a very important moment in the history of the Church. The right moment for action seems to be there. The charismas, however, are different and I have the feeling that my particular vocation is much more that of collaborating to contribute to the building up of the Body by study,

<sup>\*</sup> Excerpts of some of the many letters written to the bishop of Varanasi (India), Rev. Patrick D'Souza, with whom the author was in constant correspondence since 1968. [This Appendix, conceived as a corollary of the Opera Omnia volume on Christianity, especially relevant to the author, is aimed to bear witness to his priestly commitment, as he himself expressed it in his personal, sacramental, and institutional relationship with the head of the diocese in which he was incardinated until the end of his life. We do not adopt the chronological order, preferring to follow a thematic thread, highlighting the most salient and recurrent topics in the correspondence. [In d. c.]

May 14, 1971, from Cambridge (US).

reflection, prayer, and life than by organizing, directing, and committing myself to a particular project. But I may be mistaken and I am always ready to obey. ^2 [...]

[...] It is not the function of the philosopher (or that of the contemplative, for that matter) one of "concentrate" or condense the "stuff" and the problems of the World so that living them and "suffering" them (pati divina) he may be able to contribute efficiently in the "co-redemption" of the world?

I spend many a sleepless night pondering about the meaning of this humanity, struggling, like Jacob, with the angel, with all the problems that beset creation. For me journeys are both theoretical and practical exercises in theology and spiritual life. [...]

- [...] You may have heard of my idea of the passage from Christendom to Christianity around the Renaissance up to our days, and from Christianity to Christianness in our times. This has also to do with the question of the Laity: "ecclesia millians," "ecclesia clericalis," and "ecclesia popularis—vel populi" (if the popularis has other less palatable connotations). Undeniably everywhere there is the wind of a sacramental Church, based on Christ, the Eucharist, as the center of human life, like the family, and not the "pedam" with the larger political society of the State. The "ecclesia localis" of Vatrican II would offer the starting points. \(^1 \cdots \).
- [...] The Mystery of the Local Church is the nature of the Mystery itself. Mystery distinguishes itself from magic by the fact that the former is the meeting of two freedoms, the divine and the human (with all the risk and uncertainty); the latter is automatic. manipulates the divine and thus needs control.

Confirmation is the sacrament of freedom, because it is the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit (the very locus of liberty). The local Church is the place of the Mystery. And it requires this confidence in the Spirit, this lack of control from "higher agencies," that is so difficult to allow when the model is "monarchy," "organization," and not "people," "organism."

The Local Church is the place of Incarnation, of the entrance of God in Man. The Church as sacramentum mundi can only be the local Church because it has to be concrete, visible, material, and symbol at the same time of the "invisible" reality. "Local" means spatial, i.e., visible, incarnated, concrete. A "non-local" Church would be not even "universal." But the Universal Church is not a "church of churches" (like a council of churches, which can never be "Church") but the planetarian—local—Church, for those whose "locus" is the planet. Now for the concrete people, the real Church is always the living community. [...]

[...] Why should I feel apologetic because I try to follow a contemplative life? Why looking for justifications when I try to imitate Christ? Why present myself as a special case when I guess that any "normal" Christian life which can afford it would also consecrate the best to meditate, to praise, think and concentrate so as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> December 2, 1969, from Varanasi (India).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> October 6, 1972, from Santa Barbara (US).

<sup>4</sup> August 6, 1987, from Tavertet (Spain).

<sup>5</sup> May 10, 1975, from Santa Barbara (US).

Appendix 287

to reach that center from which everything can be reached and from which can co-redeem the world?

Perhaps some people can do this straightaway. Others may need more time. And if circumstances always have led my life, now that I have to gather so many strings in one and take some serious decision what is more normal than take time "off" and try to empry myself so as to be "naturally" filled by the Will of God?

I was telling you that I feel as strong as ever, that "sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech", and that perhaps this is also what draws me more towards contemplation than action—although I strongly sense that it would be a betrayal for me if I would withdraw at this stage from the secular (not profane) involvement.

I was thinking today that if I could have contributed to the opening of the Church cowards other religions—not only on the practical level—specially suggesting new lines for a viable theology of religions, I would have not spent my life in vain. It is a fact that due to historical and cultural reasons Christians have thought themselves as exclusive bearers of the message of salvation—and there is something in it that cannot be diluted—yet this today is insufficient to say the least, and we need a Christian self-understanding which, in no way playing down the Christian extigencies, opens up to the new situation and forms a new consciousness. E. . . ]

- [...] I feel that you are in the right path, Raymond, insisting on your Mauna, searching for more and more time with the Lord. Finally, the activity of so many years what has given to us? I am nearing my 50th birthday and I sak myself what has happened: very little. That little has generally happened in those moments of silence before the Lord. How fortunate you are that you do not have an obligation of administration, where you must empty yourself so as to listen to the voice of others. So take all the solitude you can. It will take you close to the Lord, and give you joy. [...] from the letter written on June 22, 1977, from Varanato
- [...] I am convinced that the historical dimension of reality—and of Christianity—is only one dimension and that the Indian genius is precisely to underscore the transhistorical dimension. This is the reason why I am constantly saying that the Resurrection, the Mass (the risen Christ) are central for the Christian kerygma in India much more than the merely historical facts of the incarnation. In and through Jesus, Christians come to the Mystery of Christ, but this latter by far overshadows the former." [...]
- [...] The following are the points I believe worthy of the attention of His Holiness John Paul II, at request of the Vatican curia:
  - 1. India is not Europe, nor Africa.
  - The vitality of Christianity is at stake. It is not question of imitation but of a continuation of the mystery of the incarnation.

<sup>6</sup> March 29, 1977, from Santa Barbara (US).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> April 10, 1983, from Santa Barbara (US).

- 3. Holiness is a trans-religious phenomenon, and ultimately what counts.
- The internal problems of the Church may better be solved if we become more conscious of our responsibility vis à vis the world.
- 5. Pluralism implies confidence in the other and thus decentralization.8 [...]
- [...] I am living much this Advent not as an expectation for a Coming, but as a Hope for a Presence. After all "advent" is the Latin translation for the Greek "parousia," which literally means Presence. I wish the Indian Church could complement the historical Western understanding of Christianity with a trans-historical one. "[...]
- [...] What I want to assure you is of my deep-rooted and increasing experience of the Christian reality and my conviction of the polysemous character of it. Is it not the very phenomenological aspect of transcendence?<sup>10</sup> [...]
  - [...] I have noted down for myself a beautiful sentence from your letter of December. "I am living this advent not as an expectation of his coming but as a hope for his presence." What a wonderful thing it would be. What you say is true for our Indian people. There is no idea of coming in the sense of a future action. It is always a presence, which has to be realized and of which we must become aware. It struck me powerfully when I read that sentence of yours. It is we who should be coming, nor he. He is always there. Both philosophy and literature of India speak about that presence of the Lord, which we must find. This may be because time and history are not important for India.

Theoretically I always find difficult to reconcile the incarnation with the ethos of our people. I feel that this is one of the major stumbling blocks, theologically, and possibly also pastorally. The solution to this, people like you should show. [...]

God bless you, my dear Raymond. May he always keep you close to himself. May he give you the joy of being loved by him. I pray for you as for a very dear brother, one who, I feel, is often lonely. I wish I could be more at your service. But the Lord knows how to do this better. He knows how to translate our desires, into his actions.

> Yours affectionately, Patrick D'Souza from the letter written on March 29, 1983, from Varanasi

<sup>8</sup> August 9, 1985, from Tavertet (Spain).

<sup>9</sup> December 6, 1982, from Santa Barbara (US).

<sup>10</sup> May 26, 1979, from Santa Barbara (US).

APPENDIX 289

[...] I should also report about my life. It goes well and I feel myself realizing when I have always wanted: a priestly life both pastoral and intellectual—let alone mystical. These things are awkward to report and when put on paper seem just a self-enacting propaganda. I may only say that precisely because I do not take part in "secondary disciplinary" matters, but concentrate on the fundamentals I have ample scope to fulfill my vocation.

I want to examine myself, purify my life and intentions. Holiness and health go together, as I have written and preached so often. My meditation, however, goes on other lines, I would say. I am practically seventy. I have lived a full life. I have still much to write about and even say, but I am not considering myself indispensable at all. I am rather full of joy, gratitude, and peace. In true koinonia, most devotedly and fratternally, "I

Raimon Panikkar

<sup>11</sup> October 26, 1987, from Tavertet (Spain).



### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abhişiktānanda (Swami). 1986. La montée au fond du coeur. Paris: OEIL.
- Akhilananda (Swami). 1949. Hindu View of Christ. Boston: Branden.
- Alegre, Xavier, et al., eds. 1995. Universalidad de Cristo: Universalidad del pobre.
  Santander: Sal Terrae.
- Amaladoss, Michael, et al., eds. 1981. Theologizing in India (collection of papers presented at a Seminar in Pune in 1978). Bangalore: TPI.
- Amalorpavadass, D. S., ed. 1974. Research Seminar on Nonbiblical Scriptures. Bangalore: NBCLC.
- Atanasio, Jevtić. 1996. L'infinito cammino: Umanizzazione di Dio e deificazione dell'uomo. Sotto il Monte (Bergamo): Servitium-Interlogos.
- Augstein, Rudolf. 1972. Jesus Menschensohn. Munich: Bertelsmann.
- Baird, William. 1977. The Quest of the Christ of Faith: Reflections on the Bultmann Era. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- Baldini, Massimo, and Silvano Zucal, eds. 1989. Il silenzio e la parola da Eckhart a Jabès. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von. 1938. Origenes: Geist und Feuer. Salzburg: Müller.
- ——. 1961a. Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag. 2nd ed. translated into Italian as Liturgia cosmica (Rome: AVE, 1976).
- 1961b. Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik. Volume 1, Schau der Gestalt. Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag.
- Barbaglio, Giuseppe, and Severino Dianich. 1991. Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia. 6th ed. Milan: Paoline.
- Barr, James. 1970. "The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament." Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 52: 11–29.
  - ——. 1976. "Story and History in Biblical Theology." Journal of Religion 56, no. 1: 1–17.
- Bastian, Hans-Dieter. 1969. Theologie der Frage. Munich: Kaiser.
- Bäumer, Bettina, ed. 1988. Abhinavagupta: Parātrīšikā-vivaraṇa. Eng. trans. with notes by Jaideva Sing. New Delhi: Motilal Banarisdass.
- —, ed. 1997. Mysticism in Shaivism and Christianity. New Delhi: DK Printworld.
  Bayart, Julian. 1966. "Cosmic Christ and Our Evaluation of Other Religions."

  Clergy Monthly Supplement.
- Bellet, Maurice. 1990. Christ. Paris: Desclee.
- Ben-Chorin, Schalom. 1967. Der Nazarener in jüdischer Sicht. Munich: List.

Benedikt, B., and A. Sobel. 1992. Der Streit um Drewermann. Wiesbaden: Sobel. Benjamin, Roger. 1971. Notion de personne et personnalisme chrétien. Paris: Mouton. Berdyaev, Nikolai. 1933. Esprit et liberté: Essai de philosophie chretienne. Paris: Cerf. Boff, Leonardo. 1983. Jeureitsto el Liberador: Eusayo de cristología crítica para nuestro

tiempo. Santander: Sal Terrae. Eng. trans.: Jesus Christ Liberator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

Bordoni, Marcello. 1991. "Cristologia" and "Gesu Cristo." In Barbaglio and Dianich 1991, 234–71, 530–68.

Borne, Étienne. 1987. "Ideologie antipersonaliste." In Pavan and Milano 1987, 393–414.

Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. 1973 –. Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Boulgakov, Serge [Bulgakov, Sergei]. 1982. Du Verbe Incarné. L'Agneau de Dieu, L'Age d'homme. Lausanne.

Bouyer, Louis. 1960. La spiritualité du Nouveau Testament et des Pères. Paris: Aubier. Breton, Stanislas. 1981. Unicité et monothéisme. Paris: Cerf.

Buber, Martin, ed. 1984. Mystische Zeugnisse aller Zeiten und Völker. New edition edited by P. Sloterdijk. Munich: Diederichs.

Büchner, Frederick, et al., eds. 1974. *The Faces of Jesus*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Bultmann, Rudolf. 1958a. *Jesus and the Word*. New York: Scribner's.

——. 1958b. Jesus Christ Mythology. New York: Scribner's.

Buri, Frits. 1969. Der Pantokrator. Hamburg: Herbert Reich.

Caba, José. 1977. El Jesús de los Evangelios. Madrid: BAC.

Cabada-Castro, Manuel. 1975. "La vivencia previa del absoluto como presupuesto del acceso teorético a Dios." In Vargas-Machuca, 1975.

Catherine of Siena. 1935. *Libro della divina dottrina*. Edited by A. Levasti. Milan: Rizzoli.

Chatterjee, Margaret. 1963. Our Knowledge of Other Selves. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Cobb, John B., Jr. 1975. Christ in a Pluralistic Age. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Congar, Yves. 1958. Le mystère du temple. Paris: Cerf.

——. 1981. "Le monothéisme politique et le Dieu-Trinité." Nouvelle Revue Theologique 103: 3–17.

Corbin, Henry. 1981. Le paradoxe du monothéisme. Paris: L'Herne.

Crossan, John Dominic. 1991. The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Cullmann, Oscar. 1957. Christ et le temps. Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niéstle.

Danese, Attilio. 1984. Unità e pluralità: Mounier e il ritorno alla persona. Rome: Città Nuova.

——, ed. 1986. La questione personalista: Mounier e Maritain nel dibatito per un nuovo umanesimo. Rome: Città Nuova.

Daniélou, Jean. 1961. Message évangélique et culture hellénissique. Tournai: Desclee.

——. 1968. La Trinité et le mystère de l'existence. Paris: Desclee.

Bibliography 293

- Denzinger, Henricus. 1967. Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et decla rationum de rebus fidei et morum. Barcelona: Herder.
- Deschner, Karlheinz. 1990ff. Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Des Rochers, John. 1977. Christ the Liberator. Bangalore: Centre for Social Action.
- Dictionnaire de spiritualité. 1937–1995. 17 volumes. Paris: Beauchesne.
  Di Nicola, Giulia Paola. 1991. Reciprocidad hombre/mujer. Madrid: Narcea.
- Dodd, Charles H. 1970. The Founder of Christianity. New York: Macmillan.
- Dōgen, Eihei. 1997. *Divenire l'Essere*. Shoboghenzo Ghenjokan, ed., la Comunità Vangelo e Zen. Bologna: EDB.
- Doré, Joseph. 1984. "Jésus-Christ." In Poupard 1984, 847-58.
  - ——. 1990. "Discesa agli inferi." In Poupard 1990, 558–62.
- Drewermann, Eugen. 1984–85. Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese. 2 volumes. Olten-Freiburg: Walter.
- ----. 1995. Dieu immédiat. Paris: Desclée.
- Dupré, Louis. 1987. "Mysticism." In Eliade 1987, 10:245-61.
- Dupuis, Jacques. 1966. "The Cosmic Christ in the Early Fathers." Indian Journal of Theology 15: 106–20.
- ——. 1977. Jesus Christ and His Spirit: Theological Approaches. Bangalore: TPI.
  ——. 1989. Jesus-Christ à la rencontre des religions. Paris: Desclée. Eng. trans.: Jesus
- Christ at the Encounter of World Religions (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
- ——. 1994. Who Do You Say I Am? Introduction to Christology. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- ——. 1997. Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
  - ——. 2002. Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Duquoc, Christian. 1972. Christologie II: Le Messie. Paris: Cerf.
  - . 1977. Dieu différent: Essai sur la symbologie trinitaire. Paris: Cerf.
- Eagan, Harvey D. 1984. Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition. New York: Pueblo.
  - Edwards, Denis. 1955. Jesus the Wisdom of God. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Eliade, Mircea, ed. 1987. The Encyclopedia of Religion. 16 volumes. New York: Macmillan.
- Evers, Georg. 1993. "Asian, African, and Latin American Contributions rowards Christology." In Jahrbuch für kontextuelle Theologie, 174–96. Aachen: Missio. Fanon, Frantz. 1963. Les damnés de la terre, Paris: Maspéro.
- Feiner, Johannes, and Magnus Loehrer, eds. 1970. Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik. 3 volumes. Cologne: Benziger.
- Felder, Hilarius. 1953. Jesus of Nazareth. Milwaukee: Bruce.
- Festugière, André Jean. 1936. Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon. Paris:

Flusser, David. 1968. Jesus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

- Forrester, Viviane. 1996. L'horreur économique. Paris: Favard.
- Forte, Bruno. 1985. Trinità come storia. Milan: Paoline.
- Fraijó, Manuel. 1996. El futuro del cristianismo. Madrid: SM.
- Frei, Hans W. 1975. The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Friedli, Richard. 1989. Le Christ dans les cultures. Paris: Cerf.
- Fries, Heinrich, ed. 1962. Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe. 2 volumes. Munich: Kösel.
  —————, ed. 1981. Jesus in den Weltreligionen. St. Otilien. Eos.
- Frye, Northrop. 1982. The Great Code: The Bible and Literature. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. 1972. Wahrheit und Methode. 3rd ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- —, and Paul Vogler, eds. 1975. Neue Anthropologie. 7 volumes. Stuttgart: Thieme. Galtier, Paul. 1939. L'unité du Christ: Être, personne, conscience. Paris: Beauchesne.
- ----. 1947. Les deux Adam. Paris: Beauchesne.
- ——, 1954. La conscience humaine du Christ. Rome: Gregorian University Press. Garrigou-Lagrange, Reginald. 1953. "La possibilité de L'Incarnation sans aucune déviation panchisite." Appélieum 30, no. 4: 337–46.
- Geiselmann, Joseph Rupert. 1962. "Jesus Christus." In Fries 1962, 1:739-70.
- Gispert-Sauch, George. 1974. "Biblical Inspiration as 'parama-vyanjana'?" In Amalorpavadass 1974, 136–52.
- González de Cardedal, Olegario. 1975a. "Un problema teológico fundamental: la preexistencia de Cristo: Historia y hermeneutica." In Vargas-Machuca 1975. 179–211.
- González-Faus, José Ignacio. 1984. La Humanidad Nueva: Ensayo de Cristologia. Santander: Sal Terrae. Eng. ttans.: Where the Spirit Breathes: Prophetic Dissent in the Church (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).
- ——. 1995. "Religiones de la tierra y universalidad de Cristo: Del dialogo a la diapraxis." In Alegre 1995, 103–43.
  - ——. 1996. "La cristología después del Vaticano II." In Memoria académica, 1995–1996, 105–16. Madrid: Instituto Fe y Secularidad.
- Gort, Jerald D., et al., eds. 1992. On Sharing Religious Experience: Possibilities of Interfaith Mutuality. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Graham, Aelred. 1947. The Christ of Catholicism. London: Longmans, Green.
- Grant, Robert M. 1961. The Earliest Lives of Jesus. New York: Harper & Brothers. Griffin, David Ray. 1973. A Process Christology. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Grillmeier, Alois. 1975. Mit ihm und in ihm: Christologische Forschungen und Perspektiven. Freiburg: Herder.
- —, and Michael Schmaus, eds. 1965. Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte. Volume 3. Freiburg: Herder.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 295

Guardini, Romano. 1939. Welt und Person: Versuche zur christlichen Lehre vom Menschen. Würzburg: Werkbund.

- ----. 1963. Unterscheidung des Christlichen. Mainz: Grünewald.
- Haas, Alois M. 1971. Nim din selbes war: Studien zur Lehre von der Selbsterkenntnis bei Meister Ekhart, Johannes Tauler und Heinrich Seuse. Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag.
  - 1979. Sermo mysticus: Studien zu Theologie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik. Freiburg: Switzerland: Universitätsverlag.
  - ——. 1996. Mystik als Aussage: Erfahrungs-, Denk- und Redeformen christlicher Mystik. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Hamerton-Kelly, R. G. 1973. Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-Existence in the New Testament. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hartmann, Franz. 1890. The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme. Boston: Occult Publications.
- Hausherr, Irénéé. 1955. Direction spirituelle en Orient autrefois. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum.
- Haven-Smith, Lance de. 1997. "How Jesus Planned to Overthrow the Roman Empire." Religious Studies and Theology 16, no. 1: 48-59.
- Healy, Kathleen. 1990. Christ as Common Ground: A Study of Christianity and Hinduism. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Hegermann, Harald. 1961. Die Vorstellung vom Schöpfungsmittler im hellenistischen Judentum und Urchristentum. Berlin: Akademie. Heidegger, Martin. 1966. Einführung in die Metaphysik. 3rd ed. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Heiler, Friedrich. 1961. Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion. Stuttgart. Hérmes—Recherches sur l'expérience spirituelle. 1981. Les voies de la mystique ou
- Hérmes—Recherches sur l'expérience spirituelle. 1981. Les voies de la mystique ou l'accès au sans-accès, n.s. 1. Paris: Deux Océans.
- Hockel, Alfred. 1965. Christus der Erstgeborene. Düsseldorf: Patmos.
- Hodgson, Peter C. 1971. Jesus—Word and Presence: An Essay in Christology. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Hoffman, Bengt R. 1976. Luther and the Mystics. Minneapolis: Augsburg.
- Holböck, Ferdinand, and Thomas Sartory, eds. 1962. Mysterium Kirche. 2 volumes. Salzburg: Müller.
- Isaac, Augustine. 1974. Jesus the Rebel. Mangalore: Sallak Publications.
- Jaspers, Karl. 1963. Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung. Munich: Piper.
- Jiménez Duque, Baldomero, and Luis Sala Balust, eds. 1969. Historia de la espirtitualidad. 4 volumes. Barcelona: Flors.
- Jung, Karl-Gustav. 1963. Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken. Edited by A. Jaffé.
  Zurich: Rascher.

Kahlefeld, Heinrich. 1981. Die Gestalt Jesu in den synoptischen Evangelien. Frankfurt: Knecht.

- Kasper, Walter. 1974. Jesus der Christus. Mainz: Grünewald.
- Keenan, John P. 1989. The Meaning of Christ. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Kendall, Daniel, and Gerald O'Collins. 1992. "The Faith of Jesus." Theological Studies 53: 403-23.
- Kerényi, Károly. 1976. Dionysios: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. 1964–74. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley. 16 volumes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Kittel, Gisela. 1989–90. Der Name über alle Namen. 2 volumes. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Klostermaier, Klaus K. 1997. "The Hermeneutic Center." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 2 (Spring): 159–70.
- Knitter, Paul F. 1985. No Other Name? Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- ------. 2002. Introducing Theologies of Religion. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Koyama, Kosuke. 1984. Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
  - Krempel, A. 1952. La doctrine de la relation chez saint Thomas. Paris: Vrin.
- Kröger, Athanasius. 1967. Mensch und Person: Moderne Personbegriffe in der katholischen Theologie. Recklinghausen: Paulus.
- Kuschel, Karl Josef. 1978. Jesus in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur. Zurich and Cologne: Benziger. Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn.
- 1990. Geboren vor aller Zeit? Der Streit um Christi Ursprung. Munich: Piper. Eng. trans.: Born before All Time: The Dispute over Christ's Origin (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
- Lamarche, P. 1965. "Einführung in die biblische Christologie." In Schmaus and Grillmeier 1965, 3/la:1–16.
- Lamotte, Étienne. 1958. Histoire du Bouddhisme indien. Louvain: Publications Universitaires.
- Lattanzi, Ugo. 1937. Il primato universale di Cristo secondo le S. Scritture. Rome: Lateran University Press.
- Leaney, A. R. C. 1967. *The Letters of Peter and Jude.* Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Bernard J. 1993. Jesus and the Metaphors of God: The Christs of the New Testament. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Leeuw, Gerardus van der. 1956. Phānomenologie der Religion. Tübingen: Paul Siebeck. Lefebure, Leo D. 1993. The Buddha and the Christ: Explorations in Buddhist and Christian Diadowe. Marvknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Liébaert, Jacques. 1965. "Christologie: Von der apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalcedon." In Schmaus and Grillmeier 1965, 3:19–127.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 297

Limone, Giuseppe. 1988. "Tempo della persona e sapienza del possibile: Valori, politica, diritto." In Emmanuel Mounier. 2 volumes. Naples: Edizione Scientifiche Italiane.

- Loehrer, Magnus, and Johannes Feiner, eds. 1970. Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik. Volume 3. Cologne: Benziger.
- Lonergan, Bernard J. F. 1977. The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster.
- Lubac, Henri de. 1953. Méditation sur l'Église. 3rd ed. Paris: Aubier.
- -----. 1965. Le mystère du surnaturel. 3rd ed. Paris: Aubier.
- ----. 1974. Pic de la Mirandole. Paris: Aubier.
- 1979. Mistica e mistero cristiano. In Opera Omnia, vol. 6. Milan: Jaca Book. Maisch, Ingrid, and Anton Vögtle. 1969. Jesus Christ, I. Biblical. In Rahner 1969, 174–83
- Martin, R. P. 1967. "Carmen Christi: Philippians II, 5–11 in Recent Interpretations and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin Velasco, Juan. 1995. La experiencia cristiana de Dios. Madrid: Trotta.
- Mascarenhas, Hubert Olympius. 1953. "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Medieval Scholastics." In Radhakrhisnan 1952-53, 2:149-69.
- Massa, Willi. 1995. Der universale Christus. Mettlach-Tünsdorf: Neumühle.
- May, John d'Arcy. 1990. Christus Initiator: Theologie im Pazifik. Düsseldorf: Patmos.
- McGinn, Bernard. 1992. The Foundations of Mysticism. New York: Crossroad.
- Menacherry, Cheriyan. 1996. Christ: The Mystery in History, A Critical Study on the Christology of R. Panikkar. Frankfurt: Lang.
- Mersch, Émile. 1933. Le Corps Mystique du Christ. 2 volumes. Louvain: Lessianum.

  ——. 1949. La Théologie du Corps Mystique. 2 volumes. Paris: Desclee.
- Milano, Andrea. 1984. Persona in Teologia. Naples: Dehoniane.
- Mitchell, Donald W. 1991. Spirituality and Emptiness. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. Molinos, Miguel de. 1976. Orig. ed. 1675. Guía espiritual. Critical edition by J. I. Tellechea. Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.
- Mommaers, Paul, and Jan Van Bragt. 1995. Mysticism: Buddhist and Christian. New York: Crossroad.
- Monchanin, Jules. 1985. Théologie et spiritualité missionaires. Paris: Beauchesne.
- Montefiore, Hugh W. 1966. "Towards a Christology for Today." In Soundings, ed. A. R. Vidler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, Sebastian. 1967. God Is a New Language. Westminster: Newman.
- Moran, Gabriel. 1992. Uniqueness. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Mounier, Emmanuel. 1936. Manifeste au service du personnalisme. Paris.

  ——. 1950. Feu la Chrétienité: Carnets de route. Paris; Seuil.
- ----. 1952. Personalism. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

298 CHRISTIANITY

Mount Saviour Monastery, 1972. On the Experience of God. 15 papers by monks of the Order of St. Benedict. Monastic Studies 9 (Autumn).

- Mouroux, Jean, 1952, L'expérience chrétienne: Introduction a la Théologie, Paris: Aubier, Mühlen, Heribert. 1966. Der Heilige Geist als Person. 3rd ed. Münster: Aschendorff.
- -----. 1968. Una mystica Persona. 3rd ed. Munich: Schöningh. Nédoncelle, Maurice. 1942. La réciprocité des consciences. Paris: PUF.
- . 1944. La personne humaine et la nature. Paris: PUF.
- ----. 1970. Explorations personnalistes. Paris: Aubier.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. 1978. "Christ and the Cultures." Scottish Journal of Theology 31. no. 1: 1-22.
- Nieremberg, Juan Eusebio. 1640. Diferencia entre lo temporal y lo eterno. Madrid. Nishitani, Keiji. 1982. Religion and Nothingness. Berkeley: University of California
- Nolan, Albert. 1978. Jesus before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Nurbakhsh, Javad. 1996. Iesús a los ojos de los sufies. Madrid: Darek-Nyumba.
- Ohashi, Ryosuke, ed. 1990. Die Philosophie der Kyoto-Schule. Munich: Alber.
- Olschak, Blanche Christine. 1987. Perlen alttibetischer Literatur. Wald, Switzerland: Im Waldgut.
- Orbe, Antonio, ed. 1985. Il Cristo. Volume 1, Testi teologici e spirituali dal I al IV secolo. Milan: Mondadori-Fondazione Lorenzo Valla.
- Ortega, Augusto Andrés. 1970. "Cristo: su conciencia humana y su persona divina." In Zubiri 1970, 1:91-119.
- Ozaki, Makoto. 1990. Introduction to the Philosophy of Tanabe. Amsterdam: Rodolpi B. V.
- Panikkar, Raimon. 1963. Humanismo y Cruz. Madrid: Rialp.
- Abere.
- ——. 1972a. El concepto de naturaleza, Madrid: CSIC.
  ——. 1972b. Salvation in Christ: Concreteness and Universality, the Supername. Inaugural lecture at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Theology, 1-81. Jerusalem: Tantur.
- -. 1972c. "'Super hanc petram': Due principi ecclesiologici: la roccia e le chiavi," Legge e Vangelo: Discussione su una legge fondamentale per la Chiesa, 135-45. Brescia: Paideia.
- -----. 1975b. "El presente tempiterno: Una apostilla ala historia de la salvación y a la teologia de la liberación." In Vargas-Machuca 1975, 133-75.
- ----- 1975c, "Verstehen als Überzeugtsein," In Gadamer and Vogler 1977, 7:132-67.
- California Press.
  - su una metafora." Bozze [Rome] 5/6: 117-36.

BIBLIOGRAPHY 299

——. 1981a. "Per una lettura transculturale del simbolo." Quaderni di psicologia infantile 5:53–91, 113–23.

- 1981b. The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- . 1986. "The Threefold Linguistic Intrasubjectivity." Archivio di Filosofia [Rome] 54, 1/3: 593-606.
- -----. 1989a. Trinità ed esperienza religiosa dell'uomo. Assisi: Cittadella.
- ——. 1989b. "Reader's Response." International Bulletin of Missionary Research 13, no. 2: 80.
- ----. 1990. "The Pluralism of Truth." World Faith Insight 25 (October): 7-16.
- 1991. "Indic Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of Inculturation." In Pathil 1991, 252–99.
   1992. "Are the Words of Scripture Universal Religious Categories? The Case."
- of the Christian Language for the Third Millennium." Archivio di Filosofia [Rome], 377–87.
- ——. 1993a. The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- 1993b. Ecosofia: La nuova saggezza per una spiritualità della terra. Assisi: Cittadella.
- ——. 1994a. "Neither Christomonism nor Christodualism." Jeevadhara [Kottayam] 24, no. 142 (July): 336–38.
- ---- 1994b. La nuova innocenza II. Milan: CENS.
- ——. 1996. El silencio del Buddha. Madrid: Siruela. Eng. trans. of 1st ed.: The Silence of God: The Response of the Buddha (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).
- -----. 1997. La experiencia filosófica de la India. Madrid: Trotta.
- Parappally, Jacob. 1995. Emerging Trends in Indian Christology. Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality.
- Parente, Pietro. 1951. L'io di Cristo. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- -----. 1952. Unità ontologica e psicologica dell'Uomo-Dio. Rome: Urbaniana.
- Pathil, Kuncheria, ed. 1991. Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective.
  Delhi: ISPCK.
- Pavan, Antonio, and Andrea Milano, eds. 1987. Persona e Personalismo. Naples: Dehoniane. Pelikan, Jaroslav. 1965. The Finality of Jesus Christ in an Age of Universal History: A
- Dilemma of the Third Century. Richmond, VA: John Knox.

  ——. 1987. Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture. New
  - ——. 1987. Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture. Nev York: Harper & Row.
- Peterson, Erik. 1983. Il monoteismo come problema politico. Brescia: Queriniana. German original, 1935. Pienda, Jesús Avelino de la. 1982. Antropología transcendental de Karl Rabner.
- Oviedo: University of Oviedo.
- Pieris, Aloysius. 1988. An Asian Theology of Liberation. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Poupard, Paul, et al., eds. 1984. Dictionnaire des Religions. Paris: PUF.
- 1990. Grande dizionario delle religioni. Assisi: Cittadella. Casale Monferrato: Piemme.
- Quell, Gottfried. 1967. "Pater." In Kittel and Friedrich 1964-74, 5:959-74.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli, ed. 1952–53. History of Philosophy Eastern and Western. 2 volumes. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Rahner, Hugo. 1964. Symbole der Kirche. Salzburg: Müller.
- Rahner, Karl, et al., eds. 1969. Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Rahner, Karl, and Wilhelm Thüsing. 1972. Christologie: Systematisch und exegetisch. Freiburg: Herder.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. 1993. "Le Christ, la foi et le défi des cultures." La documentation catholique, 2120, 16.VII.1995.
- Ravier, A., ed. 1964. La mystique et les mystiques. Paris: Desclée.
- Ravindra, Ravi. 1990. The Yoga of the Christ in the Gospel According to St. John. Longmead: Element Books.
- Renwart, Lion. 1993. "Image de Dieu, image de l'homme." Nouvelle Revue Theologique 115: 85-104
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1990. Soi-même comme un autre. Paris: Seuil.
- Ringgren, Helmer. 1973. "'ab-Galâ." In Botterweck and Ringgren 1973, vol. 1, cols. 1–19.
- Robinson, John A. T. 1973. *The Human Face of God.* Philadelphia: Westminster. ——. 1979. *Truth Is Two-Eyed.* London: SCM.
- Rombach, Heinrich. 1991. Der kommende Gott: Hermetik—eine neue Weltsicht. Freiburg: Rombach.
- Rosenberg, Alfons. 1986. Jesus der Mensch: Ein Fragment. Munich: Kösel.
- Rovira Belloso, Joseph Maria. 1984. La humanitat de Déu: Aproximació a l'essència del cristianisme. Barcelona.
- Ruh, Kurt. 1990. Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik. Volume 1, Die Grundlegung durch die Kirchenväter und die Mönchtheologie des 12. Jahrhunderts. Munich: Beck.
- -----. 1993. Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik. Volume 2, Munich: Beck.
- -----. 1996. Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik. Volume 3, Munich: Beck.
- Ruhbach, Gerhard, and Josef Sudbrack, eds. 1984. Grosse Mystiker. Munich: Beck.
- Rupp, George. 1973. "Religious Pluralism in the Context of an Emerging World Culture." Harvard Theological Review 66: 207-18.
- ——. 1974. Christologies and Cultures: Towards a Typology of Religious Worldviews.

  The Hague: Mouton.
- Sala-Balust, Luis, and Baldomero Jimenéz Duque, eds. 1969. Historia de la espiritualidad. 4 volumes. Barcelona: Flors.
- Santiago-Otero, Horacio. 1970. El conocimiento de Cristo en cuanto hombre. Pamplona: University of Navarra.

Bibliography 301

Scheeben, Matthias Joseph. 1941. Die Mysterien des Christentums. Edited by J. Hofer. Freiburg: Herder.

- Schestow, Leo [Le Sesto/Chesto]. 1994. Athen und Jerusalem. Munich: Matthes & Seitz.
- Schillebeeckx, Edward. 1963. Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God. New York: Sheed & Ward.
- ——. 1985. *The Schillebeeckx Reader.* Edited by Robert J. Schreiter. New York: Crossroad.
- Schiwy, Günther. 1990. Der kosmische Christus: Spuren Gottes ins Neue Zeitalter. Munich: Kösel.
- Schmaus, Michael, and Alois Grillmeier, eds. 1965. Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte.
  Volume 3. Freiburg: Herder.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. 1970. "Christologie des Neuen Testamenten." In Feiner and Loehrer 1970, 3:227–388.
- Schoonenberg, Piet. 1971. The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ. New York: Seabury.
- Schreiter, Robert J., ed. 1991. Faces of Jesus in Africa. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. Schrenk, Gottlob. 1967. "Pater." In Kittel and Friedrich, 1964–74, 5:945–59, 974–1022.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1994. Jesus, Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology. New York: Continuum.
- Sherrard, Philip. 1992. Human Image, World Image: The Death and Resurrection of Sacred Cosmology. Ipswich: Golgonooza.
- . 1995. The Greek East and the Latin West (A Study in the Christian Tradition).

  Limni, Greece: Denise Harvey. Original ed.: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Simonson, Conrad. 1972. The Christology of the Faith and Order Movement. Leiden: Brill.
- Smet, Richard de. 1976a. "The Discovery of the Person." *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 4, no. 1: 1-23.
- ——. 1976b. "The Rediscovery of the Person." Indian Philosophical Quarterly 4, no. 3: 413–26.
- Smith, Huston. 1992. "Is There a Perennial Philosophy?" In Revisioning Philosophy, ed. J. Ogilvy, 247-62. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Soares-Prabhu, George. 1981. "The Historical Critical Method: Reflections on Its Relevance for the Study of the Gospels in India Today." In Amaladoss 1981, 314–67.
- Sobrino, Jon. 1976. Cristología desde América Latina. Centro de Reflexión Teológica, Mexico. Eng. trans.: Christology at the Crossroads (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).
- Sophrony (Archimandrite). 1978. His Life Is Mine. London: Mowbrays.
- Stöckli, Thomas, ed. 1991. Wege zur Christus-Erfahrung. Dornach: Goetheanum. Strack, Hermann L., and Paul Billerbeck. 1922–28. Kommentar zum Neuen Testa
  - ment aus Talmud und Midrasch. 6 volumes. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Sudbrack, Josef, and Gerhard Ruhbach, eds. 1984. Grosse Mystiker. Munich: Beck. Sugirtharajah, R. S., ed. 1993. Asian Faces of Jesus. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Swidler, Leonard. 1988. Yeshua: A Model for Moderns. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward. Teresa de Jesús. 1967. Obras Completas. Edited by Efrén de la Madre de Dios and O. Steegink. Madrid: BAC.
- Thibaut, René. 1942. Le sens de l'Homme-Dieu. Paris: Desclee.
- Thiselton, C. A. 1974. "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings." Journal of Theological Studies 25: 283–99.
- Thomas, M. M. 1987. Risking Christ for Christ's Sake. Geneva: WCC Publications. Thompson, William M. 1985. The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis. Mahwah, NI: Paulist Press.
- Tilliette, Xavier. 1990a. "Cristo e i Filosofi." In Poupard 1990, 424-30.
- -----. 1990b. Le Christ de la philosophie. Paris: Cerf.
- —. 1993. Le Christ des philosophes. Namur: Culture et Verité.
- Tomatis, Francesco. 1994. Kenõsis del logos. Rome: Città Nuova.
- Trebolle, Julio. 1995. "La otra teodicea bíblica: el mal que procede de Dios." *Iglesia* Viva 175–76, 139–49.
- Tresmontant, Claude. 1983. Le Christ hébreu: la langue et l'âge des Evangiles. Paris: Oeil.
- Turoldo, David Maria. 1996. La parabola di Giobbe: "L'inevitabile mia storia." Servitium, Sotto il Monte (Bergamo).
- Unno, Taitetsu, ed. 1989. The Religious Philosophy of Nisihitani Keiji. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.
- ——. 1990. The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press.
- Vannini, Marco. 1989. "Praedica Verbum: La generazione della parola del silenzio in Meister Eckhart." In Baldini and Zucal 1989, 17–31.
- Vannucci, Giovanni. 1978. Il libro della preghiera universale. Florence: LEF.
- Vargas-Machuca, Antonio, ed. 1975. Teología y mundo contemporaneo. Madrid: Cristiandad.
- Vempeny, Ishanand. 1988. Kṛṣṇa and Christ. Pune: Ishvani Kendra; Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.
- Venkaresananda (Swami). 1983. Christ, Krishna and You. San Francisco: Chiltern Yoga Foundation.
- Vermes, Geza. 1973. Jesus the Jew. London: Collins.
- Waldenfels, Hans. 1985. Kontextuelle Fundamentaltheologie. Paderborn: Schöningh. Ware, Robert C. 1974. "Christology in Historical Perspective." Heythrop Journal 15, no. 1: 53–69.
- Weischedel, Wilhelm. 1975. Der Gott der Philosophen. 2 volumes. 3rd ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Bibliography 303

Wilfred, Felix, ed. 1992. Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Wilke, Annette. 1995. Ein Sein-Ein Erkennen. Bern: Lang.
- Williams, Anna N. 1997. "Deification in the Summa Theologiae: A Structural Interpretation of the Prima Pars." The Thomist 61, no. 2 (April): 219-55.
- Witherington, Ben. 1990. The Christology of Jesus. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Wong, Joseph H. P. 1984. Logos-Symbol in the Christology of Karl Barth. Rome: LAS. Woods, Richard. 1992. "I am the Son of God': Eckhart and Aquinas on the Incarna-
- tion." Eckhart Review [Eckhart Society, London] (June): 27–46.
  World Scriptures. 1991. A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts, edited by International Religious Foundation. New York: Paragon.
- Xiberta, Bartholomeus. 1954. Tractatus de Verbo Incarnato. 2 volumes. Matriti: CSIC.
- ----. 1955. Enchiridion de Verbo Incarnato. Matriti: CSIC.
- Zubiri, Xavier. 1970. Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri. 2 volumes. Madrid: EMC.
- ——. 1975. "El problema teologal del hombre." In Vargas-Machuca 1975, 55–64.



- abba (Aramaic): Father; as Jesus called God.
- Abgescheidenheit (German): "detachment"; an expression coined by Eckhart in his treatise On Detachment; represents one of the central points of his mystical conception, implying both an active and a passive attitude.
- Abgrund (German): Abyss.
- abhavyatva (Sanskrit): the inability to attain liberation; used in Buddhism and Jainism.
- abhimāna (Sanskrit): vanity, presumption, deceit, attachment.
- Abhinavagupta (Abhinavaguptācārya) (Sanskrit): a tenth-century Śivaite mystic.
- Abbişiktānanda (Sanskrit): monastic name of Henri Le Saux (1910–1973), a Hindu-Christian monk who sought to synthesize both traditions in his work and his life.
- ab intra (Latin): from within.
- ācārya (Sanskrit): teacher of Veda, spiritual guide who imparts initiation. The term is anterior to guru.
- acosmism: doctrine that denies reality and/or the value and ultimate sense of the world (cosmos).
- actio (Latin): activity, action.
- adam (Hebrew): man, the first man, as prototype, according to the Bible. Only later it became a man's name. Etymologically related to "red" and "earth," "ground."
- ad-extra (Latin): outward.
- adhyāsa (Sanskrit): "Superimposition," false attribution of divine attributes to reality.
- ādhyātmic (Sanskrit): Qualification applied to the spiritual life that transports us to a knowledge of Self (ātman), to the inner experience that corresponds to the deepest dimension of our being.
- ādi-purusa (Sanskrit): The primordial purusa.
- ad-intra (Latin): inward.
- advaita (Sanskrit): nondualism (a-dvaita). Spiritual intuition that sees ultimate reality as neither monistic nor dualistic. The recognition that the merely quantitative problem of the one and the many in dialectical reasoning does not apply to the realm of ultimate reality. The latter, in fact, possesses polarities that cannot be divided into multiple separate units; not to be confused with monism.

advaitin (Sanskrit): followers of advaita, who profess ātman-brahman nonduality. agapē (Greek): love.

- Agni (Sanskrit): the sacrificial fire and the Divine Fire, one of the most important Gods or divine manifestations, the mediator or priest for Men and Gods.
- agnihotra (Sanskrit): the daily fire sacrifice performed morning and evening in all homes of the high castes, which consists of an oblation of milk sprinkled on the fire.
- agnostic: a recently coined philosophical position that claims that there is no such thing as certain knowledge, especially with regard to God and ultimate questions.
- agon (Greek): fight, struggle, battle; the agonic sense of life.
- agora (Greek): public square where the townsfolk gathered and held meetings in ancient Greece.
- aham (Sanskrit): "I"; first person pronoun. Aham as ontological principle of existence is generally distinguished from ahamkāra as a psychological principle.
- aham asmi (Sanskrit): "I am"; a formula of spiritual creation or mahāvākya, deriving from the Brhadāranyaka-upanişad.
- ahambrahmāsmi (Sanskrit): "I am brahman," a mahāvākya that expresses the idea ātman-brahman.
- ahanıkāra (Sanskrit): the sense of the ego.
- ahinṣsā (Sanskrit): "nonviolence," respect for life, nor killing and not wounding, not desiring to carry our violence against reality. A moral and philosophical principle based on ultimate universal harmony. The root hinṣs- from hanmeans "to wound," "to kill." This is not exactly a Vedic notion; it appears only a few times in the Upaniṣad; it was developed in Jainism and Buddhism.
- Ahriman (Persian): principle of darkness and evil, according to Mazdaism; a noun deriving from Angra Mainyu (evil spirit), used by Zoroaster.
- aion (Greek): cosmic time, eternity; also a period of life.
- aisthēsis (Greek): perception, sensitivity, sense, knowledge.
- ākāša (Sanskrit): air, sky, space, ether, the fifth of the primordial elements (mahābhūtānī), which is the element of sound. It is all-pervading and infinite, and therefore often identified with Brahman.
- aliud (Latin): the other, neutral.
- alius (Latin): the other (other I).
- amerimnia (Greek): absence of anxiety.
- 'am ha'aretz (Aramaic): "people of the earth," lower classes, the disinherited, the poor, the untouchable, the ignorant, those who do not know the Torah.
- amplexus (Latin): embrace.

amṛta (Sanskrit): immortal, imperishable (a-mṛta); refers mainly to the Gods; noun, neutral: immortality, absence of death, and nectar of immortality, soma, the sacred drink (ambrosia).

- anakephalaiösis (Greek): summary of all things (in Christ); used by St. Paul.
- ānanda (Sanskrit): joy, bliss (cf. sukha), the delights of love, and especially the highest spiritual bliss; sat, cit, and ānanda represent three possible attempts at defining brahman or absolute reality.
- anātman (Sanskrit): absence of ātman, of the substantiality of an individual ontological Self.
- anātmavāda, nairātmyavāda (Sanskrit): mainly Buddhist doctrine of the insubstantiality of the ātman or Self.
- anātmavādin (Sanskrit): follower of the doctrine of anātman.
- anima mundi (Latin): soul of the world; as an analogy of man, the earth is conceived as the body of expression of a planetary Consciousness or Soul.
- animus-anima (Latin): masculine (in the woman) and feminine (in the man) image or characteristic, as psychologically thematized by C. G. Jung.
- anitya (Sanskrit): impermanence.
- antarikşa (Sanskrit): that which is "between," the space of air between the sky and the earth, atmosphere, intermediate space (cf. dyu and pr thini as two other terms for tribas.
- anthropos (Greek): man, in a general sense.
- antistrophē (Greek): Inversion, new meaning achieved by inverting the components of a word or phrase.
- anubhava (Sanskrit): direct experience, knowledge deriving from immediate spiritual intuition.
- anuttaram (Sanskrit): That which cannot be transcended, the non plus ultra.
- apatheia (Greek): impassibility, indifference, calm, imperturbability (complete liberation from all emotional stress produced by the events of life).
- apokatastasis panton (Greek): restoration of all things at the end of the world, or of a period of time, according to Christian Scripture.
- apauruşeya (apauruşeyatva) (Sanskrit): Of nonhuman origin, without puruşa.

  aporia (Greek): difficulty that prevents one from going beyond reason, dead end.

  aal (Arabic): Intellect, intelligence.
- arhat (Sanskrit): ascetic, saint, the highest and most noble figure of Theravada Buddhism.
- asat (Sanskrit): nonbeing; denial of being; as opposed to sat, being.

asparśayoga (Sanskrit): yoga without intermediary, without mental content, stopping of the mind, "nonmind."

- airama (Sanskrit): state of life, the four traditional periods in the life of the "twice-born": student (brahmacārin), head of family (grhastha), inhabitant of the forest (winaprastha), and titnerant accetic (aumpain). Also the hermitage of a monk and, therefore, the title of an ascetic. Also indicates a spiritual community, generally under the direction of a guru or spiritual teacher. Also refers to a stage in human life.
- astiti nāstiti (Sanskrit): "It is this it is not this"; being-non-being.
- asura (Sanskrit): spiritual, incorporeal, divine. In Ig-veda the highest spirit, God (from asu, life, spiritual life). Varuna is considered an asura. Later the meaning changes completely and asura (now analyzed as a-sura, or "non-God") takes on the meaning of demon or evil spirit constantly opposed to the deva (Brāhmana).
- atha (Sanskrit): here, now, furthermore; particle translated according to context.
- atman (Sanskrit): principle of life, breath, the body, the Self (from the root an, to breathe). Refers to the whole, undivided person and also to the innermost center of man, his incorruptible nucleus, which in the Upanişad is shown to be identical to Brahman. The Self or inner essence of the universe and man. Ontological center in Hinduism, which is negated in Buddhism.
- ātmānātma-vastuviveka (Sanskrit): discernment between real and unreal.
- ātmavāda (Sanskrit): doctrine that accepts the existence of the Self, the ātman, as the essential, incorruptible center of being.
- ātmavādin (Sanskrit): follower of the ātman doctrine.
- ātmavid (Sanskrit): he who knows the Self (ātman), who has fulfilled his innermost being.
- atyāśrama (Sanskrit): the state beyond the four traditional states of a man's spiritual being (cf. āśrama), which transcends them in complete spiritual freedom.
- Aum (Sanskrit): cf. Om.
- autarkeia (Greek): self-sufficient.
- avatāra (Sanskrit): "descent" of the divine (from ava-tt, descend), the "incarnations" of Vispu in various animal and human forms. Traditionally, there are ten avatāra: matsya (the fish), kūrma (the tortoise), varāba (the wild boar), narasiṃba (the lion-man), vāmana (the dwarf), Parasūrāma (Rāma with the axe), Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, and Kalkin at the end of time. In general, any personal manifestation of the Divinity, descended into this world in human form: descent as antonomasia.
- avidyā (Sanskrit): ignorance, nescience, absence of true and liberating knowledge, often identified with māyā and a cause of illusion and delusion.

āyus (Sanskrit): vital force, vitality, life, temporal existence, the length of life granted to man. Cf. Greek aiön, aeons.

bandhu (Sanskrit): bond, connection, relation, friendship, friend.

barnasha (Aramaic): Man's son.

bedhābheda (Sanskrit): Philosophy of difference and nondifference (between God and the world).

Bhaganad-gitā (Sanskrit): The "Song of the Glorious Lord," the "Song of the Sublime One"; a famous ancient Indian didactic poem included in the Mahābhārata (often called the "New Testament of Hinduism"), the most well-known sacred book in India.

bhakti (Sanskrit): devotion, submission, love for God, personal relationship with God, devotional mysticism. One of the paths of salvation through union with the divinity.

bhakti-mārga (Sanskrit): the path of love and devotion, one of the three classical spiritual paths (cf. karma-mārga, jñāna-mārga).

bhārata-nāṭyam (Sanskrit): divine dance.

bhāsva (Sanskrit): commentary.

bhiksu (Sanskrit): he who begs for food and leaves home, the monk.

bios (Greek): existence, biological life, length of life.

bodhisattva (Sanskrit): the enlightened one. In particular, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, he who, having attained liberation on earth, makes a vow to help all other beings attain liberation before they enter nirvāna.

Brahmā (Sanskrit): the creator God (cf. the "Trinity," later Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva).
It is not important in the Veda but in later periods it inherits many of the characteristics of Prajāpati.

brahmacārin (Sanskrit): student of Brahman, i.e. of Veda; novice who lives a life of chastity and purity. He who lives in the first of the four āṣrama.

brahmacarya (Sanskrit): life of a student of Brahman, also of the chastity and education of Brahman. The first of the four asrama (cf. grhastha, vānaprastha, samnyāsa).

brahman (Sanskrit): prayer, sacrifice, the inherent power in sacrifice; the Absolute, the ultimate reason underlying all things; in the Upanisad it is identified with the immanent Self (ātman). Also, one of the four priests who perform the sacrifice or the clergy in general.

Brahma-sūtra (Sanskrit): traditional Hindu text; one of the bases of the Vedānta.

Brhadāranyaka-upanisad (Sanskrit): one of the most ancient and important Upanisad.

buddhakāya (Sanskrit): lit. "body of Buddha," universal solidarity, the behavior of the Buddha.

buddhi (Sanskrit): the highest faculty of the intellect, also comprehension, thought, meditation.

cakra (Sanskrit): center of energy in the subtle body of man (related, perhaps, to each plexus); lit. "wheel."

capax Dei (Latin): capacity of the soul to perceive and receive God.

cela (Sanskrit): disciple.

cenobitic: relating to the monastery (cenobium).

Chāndogya-upanişad (Sanskrit): one of the most ancient of the Upanişad, which deals with the mystic value of sound, song and the identity of ātman-brahman.

chara (Greek): grace, joy, cheerfulness.

Christaloka (Sanskrit): From aloka, light, splendor; Christ's light.

circulus vitiosus (Latin): "vicious circle," bad reasoning, which states what is still to be proven.

circumincessio (Latin): compenetration of the three Persons of the Trinity. Corresponds to the Greek perichörësis.

cit (Sanskrit): root noun (from the root cit-, to perceive, to comprehend, etc.), meaning "consciousness, intelligence." One of the three "characteristics" of Brahman (cf. sat. ananda).

civitas Dei and civitas terrena (Latin): "city of God" and "earthly city"; theory formulated by Augustine (354–430), according to which there are two citizenships or "states."

coesse (Latin): To exist jointly, to be united; to coexist.

cogitamus (ergo) sumus (Latin): "We think (therefore) we exist."

cogito (ergo) sum (Latin): "I think (therefore) I am."

coincidentia oppositorum (Latin): coincidence of the opposites.

colloquium salutis (Latin): dialogue of salvation.

complexio omnium (Latin): integration of all things.

comprehensor (Latin): one who truly comprehends; one who already possesses the beatific vision, the fulfilled man.

compunctio cordis (Latin): repentance, heartfelt sorrow, the essential attitude of monastic spirituality.

consecratio mundi (Latin): consecration or sanctification of the world; the secular is sacralized, contemplated in its sacred dimension.

contemptus saeculi (Latin): contempt for all that is temporal and worldly.

conversio (Latin): change or transformation, generally religious; one of the translations of metanoia.

conversio morum (Latin): change in customs, way of living.

cosmotheandric: the nonseparation between World, God, and Man.

creatio continua (Latin): "continuous creation"; doctrine of the continuous creative force of God in the sense of the preservation of the universe and universal government.

Christianity: religiosity based on the experience of Christ.

daivāsurām (Sanskrit): Struggle between deva (good divinities) and asura (bad divinities).

dalit (Sanskrit): Oppressed, crushed. Name that the marginalized groups in India give themselves.

dariana (Sanskrit): from the roor drf, to see, to observe; hence vision, sight; philosophy, Weltranschauung. In a religious context it means the vision of a saint or God, hence also meeting, audience, visit.

Dasein (German): being here; real, existing man; a term used mainly by M. Heidegger; human existence.

deva (Sanskrit): connected with div, sky, light (Latin divus, deus), celestial, divine. Also God, divinity, heavenly being, cosmic power. The deva are not on the same level as the one God (sometimes called also deua, in the singular, or išvara) or the absolute (Brahman). They are powers that have different functions in the cosmos. Subsequently, the human sensory faculties are also called deva in the Upanişad.

Dhammapāda (Pāli): collection of 426 Buddhist verses of the Pāli canon.

dharma (Sanskrit): cosmic order, justice, duty, religious law, religious and social observances transmitted by tradition; "religion" as a collection of practices and laws. That which holds the world together. One of the four "human purposes" (cf. puruṣṭāsartha).

dharmakāya (Sanskrit): mystical body of dharma in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

dhyāna (Sanskrit): meditation, contemplation.

diachronic: that which extends through time.

diakonia tou logou (Greek): ministry of the word.

diatopic: that which extends through space.

digambara (Sanskrit): ascetic of the Jain religion who walks naked as a symbol of detachment and purity.

dikţā (Sanskrit): initiation: the preliminary rites; consecration of one who performs the sacrifice, such as that celebrated, for example, at the beginning of the soma and leads to a "new birth." Out of the context of sacrifice dikţā is the initiation of the disciple by the yuru into sammāsa. the life of the errant monk.

dipsychos (Greek): one who has a double soul.

disciplina arcanis (Latin): Body of secret doctrines and their teaching, reserved for the initiates of the ancient mystery religions and early Christianity; the obligation to keep silent on such matters.

discretio (Latin): discernment, discretion, prudence.

docta ignorantia: classic term used by Nicolaus Cusanus to denote supreme innocence, ignorance of one's own knowledge.

doxa (Greek): glory.

dualism: vision of a basic split within the being into two principles, each irreducible to the other, particularly spirit and matter, soul and body.

dubkba (Sanskrit): disquieted, uneasy, distress, pain, suffering, anguish (lit. "having a poor axle hole," i.e., that which does not turn smoothly), a basic concept in Buddhism and Hinduism. Opposite of subba.

Dulosigkeit (German): absence of all reference to any "you."

Durgā (Sanskrit): "Of difficult access, the inaccessible." One of the most ancient names for the divine Mother. Shiva's consort.

dvandva (Sanskrit): pair of opposites, e.g., cold and heat, pleasure and pain.

dvija (Sanskrit): one who is born a second time into the life of the spirit, the initiated. dynamis (Greek): power, energy, capacity.

ecclesia (Latin): church, assembly, reunion.

eidetic: relating to knowledge; from eidos, idea.

eidos (Greek): idea, form, appearance.

ekāgratā (Sanskrit): concentration in one spot; hence simplicity and purity.

ekam (Sanskrit): one; generally the primordial oneness, the origin of all, later identified with Brahman.

enstasis (Greek): entering fully into one's self: through concentration and meditation one artains a state of absolute identification (absorption) with the contemplated object, with the Self.

epektasis (Greek): dilatation, expansion, extension; man's trust in his divine destiny, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa. Hope.

epistēmē (Greek): science.

Erfahrungverschmelzung (German): Fusion of experiences.

erős (Latin): love.

ersatz (Ger.): substitute.

eschatology: from the Greek eschaton, which refers to the ultimate, both in relation to time (the last things that will happen, the end of this life), and in ontological importance (the ultimate reality).

exclusiosm, inclusiosm, pluralism: terms indicating an artitude toward non-Christian religions, which (a) considers the latter as being excluded from the salvation of Christ. (b) absolutizes the salvation of Christ by granting a place to non-Christian religions, and (c) recognizes that the different visions of the world are mutually irreducible.

esse sequitur operari (Latin): being follows action.

extasis (Greek): ecstasy, "outside of itself."

extra ecclesiam nulla salus (Latin): "outside the church there is no salvation."

fania (phania): Direct manifestation, derived from phanos, lamp, light.

fanum (Latin): temple, sanctuary. Cf. pro-fanum.

fides quaerens intellectum (Latin): "faith seeking understanding."

fontanalis plenitudo (Latin): Name that St. Bonaventure gives God the Father as the font whence everything emanates.

fuga mundi (Latin): escape from the world; an attitude indicating a departure from the things of this world to focus on a world beyond that is considered the "true" world.

Gautama (Sanskrit): family name of prince Siddhartha, who became the Buddha.

Gitā (Sanskrit): cf. Bhagavad-gitā.

gnōsis (Greek): saving knowledge, liberating wisdom. Cf. jñāna, prajñā.

gopī (Sanskrit): shepherdess full of love and devotion for Kṛṣṇa; symbol of the soul united with the divine being.

guhā (Sanskrit): cave, grotto, secret place (human heart).

guṇa (Sanskrit): the three qualities or attributes of being: tamas, darkness; rajas, desire; sattva, being.

guru (Sanskrit): cf. ācārya; usually refers to one who has attained fulfillment.

hamartia (Greek): sin.

haplotēs (Greek): simplicity, naïveté; h. kardias: simplicity of heart.

hara (Jap.): center, place of vital energy in man; area of the belly.

Heilsgeschichte (German): History as "salvation history."

hen (Greek): one, unit.

hermeneutics, hermeneutic: "the art of interpretation"; the theory and method of understanding and interpreting writings.

hiranyagarbha (Sanskrit): "the golden germ," a cosmological principle in the Veda, later identified with the creator (Brahmā).

holistic: that which considers reality in its entirety.

homeomorphic: that which performs a similar function.

homeomorphism: theory used in comparative religion to discover functional equivalence in two or more religions.

humanum (Latin): the basic human; that which is specific to all humanity.

hypomonē (Greek): patience, perseverance.

bypostasis (Greck): Substance, underlying reality (literally, "what lies beneath"). Key word that became controversial in the early Trinitarian disputes, above all because of the ambiguity of its Latin translation as either person or substance.

identit-iden (French): According to Ricoeur, the identity of temporal permanence (with an ontic identity), which does not entail an immutable nucleus of the person(ality).

identité-ipse (French): According to Ricoeur, the self-awareness that entails otherness so that no self-identity exists without the other.

ihāmutrārthaphala-bhoga-virāga (Sanskrit): renouncement of the reward for good deeds done.

inclusivism: cf. exclusivism.

Indra (Sanskrit): the great divine warrior who wins all battles in favor of his worshippers, both against opposing clans (dayn or disa) and against demons such as Vtrta and Vala. His vitle power is intensistible and is the soma that provides him with the energy needed for his mighty exploits. He is the liberator of the compelling forces; he releases the waters and the light. His weapon is the vaira, the lightning bolt.

intellectus agens (Latin): "Agent intellect," which some authors consider to be one of the emanations of the divine intelligence, which thus defines its unique and universal character.

Isā-upaniṣad (Sanskrit): one of the shortest of the Upaniṣad, which deals with the presence of the divine in all things.

Isa, Isaara (Sanskrit): the Lord, from the root is-, to be lord, to guide, to possess. Although a generic term for Lord, in posterior religious systems it is more often used for Siva than for Vispu. In the Vedanta it is the manifested, qualified (saguna) aspect of Brahman.

iştadevatā (Sanskrit): Icon of the divine that best corresponds to every person's culture, idiosyncrasies, and circumstances; the concrete symbol through which we experience the ultimate mystery that many call "God."

- itivuttaka (Pāli): "so I have heard"; traditional form of passing on the teachings of Buddha and the heading of a text in Buddhist writings.
- jagat-guru (Sanskrit): Universal teacher.
- Jainism: post-Vedic ascetic tradition organized by Mahāvīra (fifth to fourth centuries BC), path of purification emphasizing the importance of ahimsā (nonviolence). Religion slightly anterior to Buddhism.
- jīνa (Sanskrit): living being (from jīν-, to live); the soul in its individuality, as opposed to ātman, the universal soul. There are as many jīνa as individual living beings.
- jivannukta (Sanskiri): "liberared while alive and embodied," the highest category of the holy or fulfilled person who has reached the destination in this life and, therefore, in the human body; he who has fulfilled his ātman-braham ontological identity; he who has reached his own being, becoming totally integrated.
- jñāna (Sanskrit): knowledge (from the root jñā-, to know), intuition, wisdom; frequently the highest intuitive comprehension, the attaining of ātman or brahman. Jñāna is the result of meditation or revelation. Cf. jñāna-mārga.
- jñāna-mārga (Sanskrit): the path of knowledge, contemplation, and intuitive vision; one of the three classic paths of spiritual experience, generally considered superior to those of karman and bhakti, although many bhakta regard jñāna as merely as form of bhakti.
- jñānavādin (Sanskrit): person who claims that supreme knowledge (jñāna) is in itself sufficient for liberation. Actions barely count.
- kaivalya (Sanskrit): isolation, solitude, detachment; one of the spiritual states of supreme freedom.
- kairos (Greek): time, opportune moment, crucial point at which the destiny changes phase, epoch.
- kalpa (Sanskrit): a period of the world, a cosmic time of variable length.
- kāma (Sanskrit): the creative power of desire, personified as the God of love; one of the puruṣārtha.
- kārana (Sanskrit): cause.
- karma, karman (Sanskrit): lit. "act, deed, action"; from the root kṛ, to act, to do; originally the sacred action, sacrifice, rite, later also moral act. The result of all actions and deeds according to the law of karman that regulares actions and

their results in the universe. Later also connected with rebirth, it indicates the link between the actions carried out by a subject and his destiny in the cycle of deaths and rebirths.

karmakāṇḍin (Sanskrit): refers to those who emphasize the importance of the action, in occasions of ritual, for salvation/liberation.

karma-mārga (Sanskrit): the path of action; one of the three classic paths of spirituality (cf. bhakti, jhāna). In the Yeda it refers to sacrificial actions viewed as the way to salvation; later includes also moral actions, or all actions that are performed in a spirit of sacrifice.

katachronism: interpretation of a reality or doctrine with categories that are extraneous or posterior.

kāya (Sanskrit): body.

kāyotsarga (Sanskrit): the abandoning of all bodily activity; spiritual exercise in which even the possession of one's body is renounced.

kenõsis (Greek): annihilation, emptying of oneself, overcoming of one's ego.

kērygma (Greek): message, proclamation (of the word of God), from the Greek kērysso (to proclaim), corresponding to the first level of the evangelical teaching.

keśin (Sanskrit): "long-haired" (keśa), he who has long hair, ascetic, monk.

kleśa (Sanskrit): affliction, impurity of the soul.

koinōnia (Greek): community, communion.

kosmos (Greek): order, the ordered universe, the wholeness of the world.

Kṛṣṇa (Sanskrit): avatāṇa of Viṣṇu (lit. "the black one") and one of the most popular Gods. He does not appear in the Vêda, but he is the revealer of the Bhagavad-gitā. He is the divine child and the shepherd God of Vṛndāvana, the incarnation of love and the playful God par exellence.

kṣetra (Sanskrit): "field," both in a metaphorical and literal sense. Knowledge begins with the distinction between the field and he who knows the field, i.e., between the world (as the object) and the knowing subject.

kunamnama (Sanskrit): rigid, inflexible; the feminine form kunamnamā also indicates a feminine divinity.

kurukşetra (Sanskrit): the battlefield where the war of the Mahābhārata was fought and where Kṛṣṇa revealed the Bhagavad-gītā to Arjuna.

lama: head of Tiberan Buddhism.

laukika (Sanskrit): natural, worldly, temporal.

leitourgia (Greek): activity of the people, liturgy.

līlā (Sanskrit): divine game, the world as the amusement of God. This concept is not Vedic but Purāṇic.

linga (Sanskrit): characteristic feature of Śiva; phallus.

lingua universalis (Latin): universal language.

locus theologicus (Latin): the proper and legitimate place of theological activity.

logos (Greek): word, thought, judgment, reason. In the New Testament Christ as the word of God (In 1).

loka (Sanskrit): "world," open space, place, kingdom. Cf. triloka.

lokasamgraha (Sanskrit): the "keeping together, maintaining of the world" by the wise man and the saint through the sacred or liturgical action (concept of Bhagavad-gitā).

madhyama (Sanskrit): central position, middle.

madhyamamārga (Sanskrit): the middle path taught by Buddha.

madhyamika (Sanskrit): the school of the "middle way" in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Mādhyamika-kārikā (Sanskrit): Nagarjuna's philosophical treatise.

Mahābhārata (Sanskrit): epic poem that tells the legendary story of the Indian people and expounds its prescriptive values.

mahātma (Sanskrit): "great soul." Name of the founder of the Jain religion (fifth to fourth century BC).

mahāvākya (Sanskrit): "great saying." Refers to great expressions of the Upaniṣad that express very concisely the content of the experience of the Absolute.

 ${\it Mahāvira} \ (Sanskrit): "Great hero." Founder of Jain religion \ (sixth-fifth century BC).$ 

Mahāyāna: "great vehicle." Branch of Buddhism established in India two thousand years ago.

maithuna, mithuna (Sanskrit): union, mating, copulation both in a sexual and metaphorical sense.

Maitreyî (Sanskrit): wife of the sage Yājñavalkya. Was considered a "knower of Brahman."

- manas (Sanskrit): mind in its broadest sense, heart, intellect, the internal organ that is the sear of thought, comprehension, feeling, imagination, and will. In Upanisadic anthropology manas is one of the three constituent principles of man (cf. vāc, prāṇa).
- mandala (Sanskrit): lit. "circle." Mystic representation of all reality: a pictorial illustration of the homology between the microcosm (man) and the macrocosm (the universe). Also a book of the fg-veda (a "circle" of hymns). The Ig-veda is made up of ten mandala.
- mantra (Sanskrit): prayer, sacred formula (from the root man-, to think), sacred word, a Vedic text or verse. Usually only the part of the Veda consisting of

the Samhitā is called a mantra. As it is a word of power it may also take the meaning of magic formula or spell.

Manu (Sanskrit): the father of humanity, the man par exellence; also the first priest to establish sacrifices.

märga (Sanskrit): road, path, way.

martys (Greek): martyr; one who gives testimony for his own life, even through death.

matha (Sanskrit): monastery.

mauna (Sanskrit): silence, practiced by the silent itinerant monk; cf. muni.

māyā (Sanskrit): the mysterious power, wisdom, or ability of the Gods, hence the power of deceit, of illusion. In the Vedānta it is used as a synonym of ignorance and also to indicate the cosmic "illusion" that shrouds the absolute Brahman.

mederi (Latin): to heal, to treat.

metanoia (Greek): transformation, change of mentality or heart, conversion; going beyond (meta) the mental or rational (nous).

metron (Greek): measure, meter.

mikrokosmos (Greek): the entire reality reflected or concentrated in the individual; "man as mikrokosmos" refers to man as compendium of the cosmos.

mimanusa, mimanusaka (Sanskrit): one of the six classic systems of Indian philosophy which deals mainly with the rudiments and the rules for interpreting the Vedic writings. From the root manu-, to think. The two main schools are the purvami manusa, which focuses on the ritual interpretation of the Veda (cf. karmakandin) and the uttarami manusa, which gives a philosophical and spiritual interpretation.

mokşa (Sanskrit): ultimate liberation from sanstāra, the cycle of births and deaths, and from karman, ignorance, and limitation: salvation. Homeomorphic equivalent of söteria.

monism: from Greek monon, unique; concept by which all things are traced back to a single active principle.

monos (Greek): one, unique.

monotropos (Greek): alone, solitary, he who lives in one place only.

morphē (Greek): figure, form, apparition.

morphology: the study of form, especially the forms of development of the living and of culture.

mu (Jap.): nothing, nonbeing.

mumukṣutva (Sanskrit): desiderative form of the root muc- (cf. mokṣa); desire for salvation, and yearning for liberation, the necessary prerequisite for embarking on the path of liberation.

muni (Sanskrit): a silent monk, ascetic; an ecstatic. One who practices mauna, silence.

- mysterium coniunctionis (Latin): The mystery of conjunction, reintegration into unity of the broken parts; the reunification of opposites, of the sexes in the original unity.
- mythos (Greek): the horizon of presence that does not require further inquiry.
- Nachiketas (Sanskrit): name of a young brahman who descends into the realm of Yama and discusses ultimate questions with him (in the Katha-upanisad). Some have interpreted his name as "he who does not know," i.e., the novice, the seeker.
- nāda (Sanskrit): sound, original vibration in the emanation of the word; an important concept in Tantric cosmogony (cf. also bindu).
- Nāgārjuna (Sanskrit): One of the most important philosophers of Mahāyāna Buddhism, founder of the Mādhyamika school.
- nāma-rūpa (Sanskrit): "name and form," the phenomenic world that constitutes the samsāra.
- neti neti (Sanskrit): "not this, not this" (na iti), i.e., the negation of any kind of characterization of the ātman or brahman in the Upanişad; pure apophatism.
  - nirguṇa-brahman (Sanskrit): Brahman without attributes and qualities, the unqualified, transcendent Absolute.
  - nirodha (Sanskrit): halt, destruction.
- nirvāṇa (Sanskrit): lit. "the going out (of the flame)," extinction. The word does not refer to a condition, but indicates liberation from all dichrotomy and conditioning, whether it be birth and death, time and space, being and nonbeing, ignorance and knowledge, or final extinction including time, space, and being: the ultimate destination for Buddhism and Iainism.
- nirvikalpa (Sanskrit): certain, beyond doubt.
- nitya (Sanskrit): the eternal, permanent, real.
- nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka (Sanskrit): discernment between permanent (eternal) and temporal things.
- noēma (Greek): In Husserl's phenomenology, the unity of intellectual perception.
  noësis noëseos (Greek): The thought of thought, characteristic of the pure act or the
  Aristotelian first mover.
- nomos (Greek): custom, rule, law.
- noumenon (Greek): That which is hidden behind the appearance (phaino-menon); beyond sensible experience; "that which is thought"; the thing in itself.
- nous (Greek): mind, thought, intellect, reason.

ob-audire (Latin): to listen, to obey.

Ohrmazd (Persian): or Ahura Mazdā; God of light and truth in the Medo-Persian religion and that of the Avesta.

oikonomia (Greek): science of the management of household affairs (of the human family). Stewardship of the human babitat, home economics.

Om (Sanskiti): the sacred syllable, formed by three letters A-U-M. Also means "yes," so be it" (amen). Used also at the beginning and end of every recitation of sacred writings and is believed to have a mystic meaning. The highest and most comprehensive symbol of Hindu spirituality, which is also used as a mantra in Buddhism. Manifestation of spiritual energy, which indicates the presence of the Absolute in the world of appearance.

ôn (Greek): participle of the verb "to be" (einai); being, that which is higher, entity, that which exists

ontonomy: intrinsic connection of an entity in relation to the totality of Being, the constitutive order (nomos) of every being as Being ( $\delta n$ ), harmony that allows the interdependence of all things.

operari sequitur esse (Latin): "acting follows being."

opus operantis Christi (Latin): By means of the work done by Christ (and transmitted to Man as grace).

opus operatum (Latin): The work done, used mostly in the phrase ex opere operatio, referring to the fact that the grace that the sacraments transmit is not produced ex opere operantis (by the action and virtue of the one who acts, the celebrant) but by virtue of the sacrament being performed and conferring the grace promised by Christ (ex opere operato Christi).

orthodoxy and orthopraxy: "correct doctrine" and "correct action."

pan (Greek): all, everything.

Pantokratör (Greek): the Sovereign of all; designates Christ and also God.

paramahamsa (Sanskrit): "sublime swan," i.e., the supreme soul, a liberated person who enjoys complete freedom, a class of ascetics.

pāramārthika (Sanskrit): ultimate level, ultimate reality, true reality.

paredra (Greek): female companion.

parigraha (Sanskrit): tendency to possess, hoarding.

parousia (Greek): the return, the presence, the second coming of Christ.

pars in toto (Latin): the part in the whole.

pars pro toto (Latin): the part that represents the whole.

pati divina (Latin): passive attitude of man toward the "touches" of the divine; synonym of mystic experience.

penthos (Greek): repentance, sadness.

perichōrēsis (Greek): notion of the early Church Trinitarian doctrine describing the interpenetration of divine persons. Corresponds to the Latin circumincessio.

phainomenon (Greek): phenomenon, that which appears, that which shows itself.
phaneros (Greek): bright, from phanos, light.

pisteuma (Greek): from pistēō; what the believer believes, the "intentional" meaning of religious phenomena, in contrast to noēma.

pleroma (Greek): fullness, the full, complete.

polysemic: having several meanings.

pluralism: cf. exclusivism.

polis (Greek): the city-state of ancient Greece.

politeuma (Greek): belonging to the social body, political unit. Cf. conversatio.

Prajāpati (Sanskrit): "Lord of creatures," the primordial God, Father of the Gods and all beings. His position is central in the Brābmaņa.

prajñā (Sanskrit): understanding and awareness, consciousness, wisdom. Cf. gnôsis, iñāna.

pramāna (Sanskrit): means for attaining valid knowledge.

prāṇa (Sanskrit): vital breath, life, the breath of life, the vital force that holds the body together. In the Upaniṣad one of the three constitutive principles of the human being (cf. vāc, manas). It is made up of five types of breath (prāṇa, apāṇa, vyāṇa, samāṇa, udāṇa). The cosmic equivalent of prāṇa is Vāyu, air, wind.

prasthānatraya (Sanskrit): term referring to the three principle texts of the Vedānta (Upanisad, Bhagavad-gītā, and Brahma-sūtra).

pratisthā (Sanskrit): foundation, support, base.

pratityasamutpāda (Sanskrit): Buddhist doctrine of the "conditioned genesis" or "dependent origination." which claims that nothing exists for itself but carries within itself the conditions for its own existence, and that everything is mutually conditioned in the evel of existence.

preambula fidei (Latin): Presuppositions or preambles of the faith (God's existence and unity, the soul's immortality, etc.).

primum analogatum (Latin): the point of reference for every analogy.

pro-fanum (Latin): pro-fane; outside the temple (fanum).

psychē (Greek): soul, psyche, heart, animated being.

pūjā (Sanskrit): worship, reverence, adoration. The concept is more closely related to the bhakti cult than the Vedic cult.

purohita (Sanskrit): priest, liturgy.

Purana (Sanskrit): ancient history, narrative, myth; a class of literature incorporating Hindu mythology.

- Purus, a (Sanskrit): the Person, the spirit, man. Both the primordial man of the cosmic dimension (fe-veda) and the "inner man," the spiritual person existing within man (Upanisad). In the Sāṃkhya it is the spiritual principle of reality (cf. prakṛti).
- puruṣasūkta (Sanskrit): One of the last hymns in the Rg-veda, in which the primordial man is described (puruṣa).
- Puruşottama (Sanskrit): The supreme person, the supreme Spirit or supreme Soul; designation of the Self insofar as it is transcendent.

quaternitas perfecta (Latin): the perfect quaternity.

qui/quid pro quo (Latin): substitution of one thing for another; error consisting in the mistaking of one person (qui) or thing (quid) for another.

rāhib (Arabic): instructor, teacher, monk.

Rama (Sanskrit): avatāra of Viṣṇu and one of the most popular of the Vedic Gods. Son of Daśaratha and husband of Sita, Rama is a model of uprightness and the great hero of the Ramayana.

Rāmāyana (Sanskrit): Indian epic poem.

ratio (Latin): reason.

res cogitans / res extensa (Latin): thinking thing / extended thing, division of reality, according to Descartes.

res significata (Latin): signified thing.

Ig-veda (Sanskrit): the most ancient and important of the Veda texts.

- rsi (Sanskrit): seer, sage, wise man; the poer-sages to whom the Veda were revealed. Regarded as a special class of beings, superior to men and inferior to the Gods. According to one tradition there were seven rsi, probably the seven priests with whom Manu performed the first sacrifice and the seven poet judges in the assembly. Their identification with the names of ancient seers and with the stars of the Ursa Major occurred later (Brābmana).
- rta (Sanskrit): cosmic and sacred order, sacrifice as a universal law, also truth; the ultimate, dynamic, and harmonious structure of reality.
- Sakti (Sanskrit): Energy, force, power. The active, dynamic—feminine—aspect of reality or a God (generally Shiva); is personified as Shiva's goddess consort who discharges the creative function.

Glossary 323

Saccidānanda (Sanskrit): Brahman as Being (sat), Consciousness (cit), and Bliss (ānanda).

- sadguru or satguru (Sanskrit): eternal teacher, teacher archetype, universal guru.
- sādhaka (Sanskrit): one who practices a spiritual, yoga discipline.
- sādhana (Sanskrit): spiritual practice or discipline.
- sādhu (Sanskrit): straight, leading straight to the goal, good, just. A good person, renunciant, monk, or ascetic.
- sādhvī (Sanskrit): female ascetics in Hinduism and especially Jainism; feminine form of sādhu.
- saeculum (Latin): the human age, era, century; also spirit of the day.
- saguna-brahman (Sanskrit): Brahman with quality, corresponding in the Vedānta to Īśvara, the Lord.
- sahṛdaya (Sanskrit): "Man-of-heart."
- śaivasiddhānta (Sanskrit): religion, philosophical/religious school pertaining to Hinduism; dominant Śivaism in Tamil Nadu.
- Sakti (Sanskrit): energy, potency, divine power, the creative energy of God. The active, dynamic—feminine—aspect of reality or of a God (generally of Siva). Personified as the goddess Sakti, consort of Siva with a creative function.
- salus (Latin): health, salvation.
- Sama (Sanskrit): calm, tranquility, method of mental appearement.
- samādhi (Sanskrit): state of deep concentration, compenetration, immersion, perfection (enstasy); the last of the yoga stages; also the tomb of a saint.
- samgha (Sanskrit): the (monastic) community of those who follow the path of the Buddha.
- saṃmyāsa (Sanskrit): renunciation, the fourth stage of life spent as an errant monk (from samnyas-, to suppress, to renounce, to abandon).
- saṃnyāsin (Sanskrit): renunciant, ascetic; pertaining to the fourth stage or period of life (āśrama), to some the superior stage.
- sampradāya (Sanskrit): tradition, religious system and community that follows a tradition.
- samsāra (Sanskrit): the impermanent phenomenic world and the condition of identification with it, the temporal existence, the cycle of births and deaths, of conditioned existences; state of dependence and slavery.
- sanjskåra (Sanskrit): "sacrament," rites that sanctify the various important stages and events in human life. Also karmic residues, physical impressions left over from previous lives, which in some way influence the individual existence of a person.

samudaya (Sanskrit): origin.

sanātana dharma (Sanskrit): Eternal law, imperishable law, name that Hinduism attributes to itself inasmuch as it does not trace itself either to a founder or to any temporal origin.

Sankara (Sanskrit): eighth-century Hindu philosopher and teacher; one of the most famous exponents of nondualist Vedānta.

Śānti (Sanskrit): peace, tranquility, quiescence. The closing mantra of many prayers and oblations.

śānti-mantra (Sanskrit): introductory invocation or prayer of an Upanişad, which is generally common to all the Upanişad of the same Veda. Recited at the beginning and usually also the end of an Upanişadic reading, although not actually part of the text.

śraddhā (Sanskrit): Faith, trust (in the Veda's doctrines).

sarvam dubkham (Sanskrit): "all is suffering," a classic Buddhist statement.

sarvam-sarvātmakam (Sanskrit): Everything is related to everything else.

śāstra (Sanskrit): precepts, orders, rules, authoritative teachings; body of traditionally authorized texts.

sat (Sanskrit): essence (present participle of as-, to be), existence, reality. Ultimately, only the Brahman is sat, as pure Being is the Basis of every existence. In the Vedānta one of the three "qualifications" of the Brahman (cf. cit, ānanda).

Satapatha-brāhmaņa (Sanskrit): "Brāhmaņa of one hundred paths," the most complete and systematic of the Brāhmaņa.

satori (Japanese): experience of enlightenment in Zen.

Sat-purusa (Sanskrit): Universal man.

satyāgraha (Sanskrit): active nonviolence of those who live for the truth.

satyasya satyam (Sanskrit): true truth, true reality, the being of the existent.

Stavana (Sanskrit): Heard, listened to, to know how to listen or receive the teaching from the master's lips. Hearing the Vedas is the first of the three stages that Vedanta considers necessary in order to achieve spiritual knowledge.

Śūnyatā (Sanskrit): Empty, emptiness, nothingness; represents Buddhism's ultimate reality.

schola Domini (Latin): school of the Lord.

secularity, secular: of this world, being-in-time, being-in-the-world (from Latin saeculum).

Selbstgehörigkeit (German): Self-belonging, a characteristic of the person. semper maior (Latin): always greater.

septuaginta (Latin): "the Seventy" (translators); translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, carried out in the third to first centuries BC in Alexandria.

shōbōgenzō (Japanese): Custodian of the vision of authentic reality—chief work of the Japanese master, Eihei Dōgen, who introduced Zen.

simplicitas cordis (Latin): simplicity of heart.

śisya (Sanskrit): disciple (cf. guru).

Sitz im Leben (German): vital setting, context.

Siva (Sanskrit): propitious, gracious, pleasant, benevolent: He who is of good omen; in the Veda it is Rudra who is known to the Svetäsvatara-upaniţad as Siva, one of the most important Gods of Hindu tradition. He is the destroyer of the universe (cf. also Brahmā, Viṣṇu), and also the great yogin and model of asseries. His consort is Pārvati or Umā.

Sivaism, Sivaita (Sanskrit): one of the two great families of the Hindu religion, whose God is Siva.

sobrietas (Latin): sobriety, moderation.

sola fides (Latin): "the one faith," the response of Scholasticism to philosophically unsolvable theological questions; the central doctrine of Luther.

soma (Sanskrit): the sacrificial plant from which the juice of the soma is extracted through elaborate rituals, hence the sap or drink of immortality (amṛta is another name for soma); a divinity ("Soma the king"). Soma was used ritually for entering a higher state of consciousness. Later it also took on the meaning of "moon."

soma (Greek): body.

sophia (Greek): wisdom.

sōteria (Greek): salvation, liberation, redemption.

speculatio (Latin): Speculation, from speculum (mirror), a type of thought that in Neoplatonism denoted the act of seeing God by starting from His reflection in created things; different from contemplatio, which is to consider God as God is in Godself.

śraddhā (Sanskrit): "faith," the active trust (in Gods or in the rite itself) required in every act of worship; confidence (in the teachings of the Veda). In the Ie-veda (X.151), šraddhā is invoked almost as a divinity.

śrāddha (Sanskrit): rite of homage to deceased relatives; offering to ancestors generally made by the son of the deceased and repeated on certain occasions. Consists in oblations of food to the ancestors and a meal for relatives and priests.

śri (Sanskrit): splendor, brilliance, glory, beauty, preeminence; used as a title for Gods, saints and respected persons; the consort of Visnu.

śruti (Sanskrit): "that which has been heard," the Vedic revelation, an expression mainly used in sacred texts, Veda and other authoritative Hindu scriptures, which reveal to the human spirit the entire corpus of the Veda transmitted orally.

- stūpa (Sanskrit): sacred place or sacred mountain in Buddhism.
- sui generis (Latin): "of its own kind."
- sukha (Sanskrit): happiness, pleasure, joy, bliss.
- śūnya, śūnyatā (Sanskrit): void, vacuity, nothingness, the structural condition of reality and all things; represents the ultimate reality in Buddhism (cf. nirvāŋa).
- susupti (Sanskrit): deep, dreamless sleep; one of the four states of consciousness, along with wakefulness, dreaming, and the state of conscious enlightenment.
- sūtra (Sanskrit): lit. "yarn, thread of a fabric." Short aphorism in a sacred text that generally cannot be understood without a comment (bhāgya). The literature of the sūtra is part of the smrti and is conceived to be easily memorized.
- Svetaketu (Sanskrit): son of Gautama; in the Chândogya-upaniṣad a famous disciple of Uddalaka, to whom is imparted the highest teaching on the âtman and the brahman, which ends with tat twam asi ("that is you").
- Svetäšvatara-upanisad (Sanskrit): one of the principles of the last Upanisad, frequently cited in the Vedānta, which tends to personify the supreme principle (Brahman) and identify it with the God Siva or Rudra.
- symbolon (Greek): symbol.
- synechēs (Greek): continuous, uninterrupted, persevering, solid: that which keeps something in cohesion.
- Taboric light: the light that illuminated Jesus in the transfiguration; this light may be regarded as the visible character of divinity, the energy or grace by which God allows himself to be known; Man may receive this light.
- taṇḥā (Pāli): thirst; thirst for existence; origin of all suffering, according to Buddhism.

  Cf. trṣṇā.
- Tantra (Sanskrit): lit. weave, weaving, loom; religious system not based on the Yeda, consisting in secret doctrines and practices that give access to hidde powers; accentuates the interrelation between body and soul, matter and spirit; the development of special powers. The Tantric tradition has practically permeated the entire spiritual tradition of Asia. The basic assumption of all Tantric practices is the interrelation between body and spirit, matter and soul, bhuksi (pleasure) and muksi (liberation).
- tao (Chinese): "way," a central concept in Chinese philosophy, especially Taoism.
- Tao-te Ching (Chinese): "the book of the way and its power," a fundamental work of philosophical Taoism in China, attributed to Laotzi (sixth century BC), historically demonstrable from third century BC.

ta panta mataiotes (Greek): all (is) vanity.

tapas (Sanskrit): lit. heat; hence inner energy, spiritual fervor or ardor, austerity, ascesis, penitence. One of the forms of primordial energy, along with kāma.

Targum (Aramaic): "Interpretation"; different collections in Aramaic of translations and commentaries on the canonical texts of the Hebrew Bible.

tat (Sanskrit): demonstrative pronoun: "that." Opposite of idam (this), refers to
Brahman. When isolated, it refers to the ultimate reality without naming it.

Tathagata (Sanskrit): lit. "the one thus come, who has attained being, who has extinguished himself," an appellative of Buddha.

tattva: essence, true nature, reality; philosophical principle.

tat tvam asi (Sanskrit): "that is you," an Upanişadic expression meaning that ātman is ultimately Brahman. One of the four Great Sayings (mahāvākyānī) of the Upanisad. as taught to Svetaketu.

technē (Greek): art, ability, handicraft.

tempiternity: nonseparation between time and eternity.

theandric: "divine-human" (from Greek theos and aner).

 $\it the anthropocosmic: ``divine-human-cosmic" (from Greek \it the os, \it anthropos, and \it kosmos).$ 

theologoumenon (Greek): A theological assertion; the result and expression of the effort to understand the faith.

theoreia (Greek): theory; originally in the sense of "contemplation."

tīkā (Sanskrit): commentary, generally of the sūtra.

tīrthankara (Sanskrit): line of great sages/saints in Jainism.

tonsura: preparatory religious rank for receiving the minor orders in Christianity; special haircut as a distinctive mark of the clerical status that distinguishes it from the secular and signifies separation from the world.

triloka (Sanskrit): the "triple world," totality of the universe, consisting in three realms: earth, atmosphere, and sky, or earth, sky, and the nether regions (later called hell); the inhabitants of the three worlds are Gods, men, and demons.

tṛṣṇā (Sanskrit): thirst; cf. taṇhā.

tvam (Sanskrit): you (personal pronoun, second-person singular).

tyāga (Sanskrit): renunciation, abandonment of possessions and attachments.

umma (Arabic): the community of believers; church.

Ungrund (German): bottomless, without foundations, abyss.

Upadesasāhasrī (Sanskrit): "The (book) of the thousand instructions," one of Sankara's principal works.

Upanisad (Sanskiri): fundamental sacred teaching in the form of texts constituting the end of the Veda: part of the revelation (fruit) and basis of posterior Hindu thought.

upekşā (Sanskrit): equanimity, detachment, benevolence.

utrumque (Latin): the one and the other.

- vāc (Sanskrit): word; the sacred, primordial, and creative Word; sound, also discourse, language, the organ of speech, voice. Sometimes only the *Ig-veda* and other times all the *Veda* are referred to as vāc.
- vairāgya (Sanskrit): estrangement, renunciation, indifference; one of the requisites of the spiritual path.
- vānaprastha (Sanskrit): inhabitant of the forest, hermit; the third stage of life or āśrama, when the head of family withdraws into solitude, with or without his wife, after having fulfilled his earthly duties.
- Varuna (Sanskrit): one of the main Gods of the Veda; Varuna is king, commander, and supervisor of the moral conduct of men. He is Lord of rta, cosmic and moral order. He is often invoked together with Mitra. Due to his close association with water he later became known simply as a God of water, the Lord of the ocean.
- vāyu (Sanskrit): air, wind, personified as a God in the Veda.
- Veda (Sanskrit): lit. knowledge (from the root vid., to know); the sacred knowledge incorporated in the Veda as the entire body of "Sacred Scriptures" (although originally they were only passed on orally). Strictly speaking, "Veda" refers only to the Samhitā (Ig-veda, Yajur-veda, Sāma-veda, Atharva-veda); generally, however, Brāhmaņa and Upaniṣad are also included. In the plural it refers to the four Veda.
- vedanā (Sanskrit): sensation, feeling.
- Vedánta (Sanskrit): lit. end of the Veda, i.e., the Upanițad as the climax of Vedit wisdom. In the sense of Utrarami mămsă or Vedântavâda, a system of Indian philosophy (Advaira-vedânta, Dvaira-vedânta, etc.) based on the Upanițad, which teaches a spiritual interpretation of the Veda; one of the last schools of Hindu philosophical thought, of which the most renowned representatives include Sańkara, Ramānuja, and Madhva.
- viator (Latin): traveller, novice, aspirant, disciple.
- vidyā (Sanskrit): knowledge, wisdom, also branch of knowledge; a section of a text in the Upanişad.
- vihāra (Sanskrit): monastery, generally in Buddhism; Buddhist or Jain temple.
  vinaya (Sanskrit): collection of moral rules and practices in Buddhism.

visio beatifica (Latin): Beatific vision, direct and immediate vision of God that is achieved, on the whole, after the death of those who have been saved; it entails the full and definitive experience of communion with God.

- Vişnu (Sanskrit): important God in Hinduism, featured in the ancient Veda; his name means "the all-pervading one." Associated with the sun, he is famous for his three great strides with which he measured the three worlds. He later became the second component of the trimurti, the preserver, and is mainly worshipped in his avatara (cf. Krna. Rāma).
- viṣṇuita (Sanskrit): Followers of Vishnuism, one of Hinduism's three great orientations.
- Vivekacii fămaņi (Sanskrit): "jewel/diadem of discernment," an important work of the Advaita-vedānta, written by Sankara, which deals with the distinction between true reality and the phenomenic world.
- vrata (Sanskrit): vow, religious observance.
- vyāvahārika (Sanskrit): "relating to earthly matters, to mundane life," i.e., the earthly way of seeing, the practical perspective; the relative level.

wu wei (Chinese): "nonaction" in Taoist philosophy.

xeniteia (Greek): the state of being a stranger.

- yakṣa (Sanskrit): spiritual, semidivine, supernatural being; beings belonging to a higher level than the physical.
- Yama (Sanskrit): the "twin" of Yamī, the first man and the first to pass through death and obtain immortality; hence the predecessor of men on the path of death and he who commands in the realm of the dead. Later became the personification of Death and the Lord of the nether regions.
- Yami (Sanskrit): the sister of Yama, with whom she forms the first couple of humans on the earth. Although her brother attempts to commit incest with her, she (according to some texts) does not yield.
- yang (Chinese): the solar, celestial, masculine aspect in the yin-yang polarity.
- yin (Chinese): the lunar, earthly, feminine aspect; complement of yang.
- yoga (Sanskrit): from the root yuf-, to yoke, to join, to unite, to prepare, to fix, to concentrate; union; method of mental, physical, and spiritual union; concentration and contemplation, which also uses bodily posture (āsanā), breathing control (prāṇāmā) and spiritual techniques. Yoga appears to be an extremely ancient Indian practice that was developed into a system by Patafijali (Yōga-sārnā) and made to correspond to the philosophical system

Sāṃkhya. Yoga as a method has become a fundamental factor in practically all religions of Indian origin.

- yogin (Sanskrit): the ascetic, one who practices self-control, a follower of the path of yoga.
- zen (Japanese): from the Sanskrit dbyāna (deep meditation): school of Buddhism that claims to be the purest and most direct path to enlightenment (satori, nirvana).

## INDEX OF NAMES

Berdvaev, Nikolai, 126n3, 164n Abhinavagupta (Abhinavaguptācarya), 144, 148 Bergson, Henri, 164n Bermeio, Luis, 92 Abhisiktānanda, xx, 145 Bernard of Clairvaux, 10, 252 Abraham, 134, 178 Adam, 21, 56, 58-59 Blondel, Maurice, 60, 164n Boff, Leonardo, 92, 195n15 Alaric 8 Alexander VI. xv Böhme, Jakob, 214, 252 Ambrose of Milan, 90, 168, 225n74 Bonaventure, 174, 214, 247, 283n1 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 102n2 Ambrosiaster, 90n37 Ananias, 60 Boniface VIII, xv. 40 Bordoni, Marcello, 185n86 Anaxagoras, 164 Aguinas, Thomas, 32, 59, 89, 90, 111, Botterweck, G. Johannes, 193n12 130, 136, 150-51, 165n47, 168, Bradley, E. H., 57 171, 182, 183, 187n92, 191-92, Breron, Stanislas, 119n10 196n17, 197, 198n20, 199, 211, Brunner, Emil, 102n2 Buber, Martin, 164n 215n57, 217-18, 221n68, 229, Büchner, Frederick, 187n91 233n90, 252, 258-59, 270 Aristarchus of Samos, 264 Buddha, 21, 178, 217n62 Aristide, Jean-Bertrand, 76n17 Bühler, Pierre, 94n41 Bulgakov, Sergei, 164n, 183, 231n89 Aristotle, 85, 89, 114n2, 136, 174, 176n69, 183, 211, 216n60, 261 Bultmann, Rudolf, 102n2, 164n, Arius, 198, 214 186n88 Aśoka, 177, 248 Augstein, Rudolf, 153n Caesar, 177 Calvin, John, 182 Augustine, 8, 20, 28, 33, 58, 59-60, 80, 94, 109, 127, 135, 148, 167, Câmara, Hélder, 43 174, 182, 158, 192, 197, 199, 202, Camus, Albert, 165 208, 214, 215nn58-59, 218n63, Cardedal, González de, 193 220, 263, 267, 278 Casaldáliga, Pedro, 76n17, 279-80 Catherine of Genoa, 183 Barbarossa, Frederic, 45 Catherine of Siena, 226n77, 252

Charlemagne, xv

Chuang-tzu, 225

Charles, Pierre, 65-66

Chatterjee, Margaret, 160n35

Clement of Alexandria, 135, 270

Cicero, 117, 136, 225n74

Barnabas, 29

Basil, 267

Barth, Karl, 15, 102n2

Bellarmino, Roberto, 42

Bellet, Maurice, 176n69

Ben-Chorin, Schalom, 152n20

Comenius, John Amos, 76n17, 267 Congar, Yves, 102n2, 119n10 Constantine, xv. 89 Copernicus, 21, 27, 258 Corbin, Henry, 119n10 Croce, B., 77 Crossan, John Dominic, 151n17, 152n20 Cullmann, Oscar, 164n Cunneen, Joseph, 103 Curran, Charles, 92 Cyprian, 270 Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso), 53, 54 Dandaneus, Maximilian, 130n7 Danker, W. J., 9n12 Dante Alighieri, xv, xix, 33

De Nobili, Roberto, 9 Descartes, René, xvii, 33–34, 169 Deschner, Karlheinz, 152n.19 DiLascia, Alfred, 103 Dionysius the Areopagite, 143, 252 Dodd, C. H., 184n.79 Dögen, Eihei, 111 Drewermann, Eugen, 186n.87 D'Souza, Partick, xxii, 285, 288

De Lubac, Henri, 102n2, 119n11,

Day, Dorothy, 76n17

170n59

D'Souza, Patrick, xxii, 285, 288 Duchess of Alba, 76n17 Dupré, Louis, 144n1 Dupuis, Jacques, 155n27, 187n93,

207n35 Duquoc, Charles, 94n41, 243n3 Durgā, 178, 179

Ebner, Ferdinand, 164n Eckharr, Meisrer, xix, 120n13, 130, 135, 159n33, 175n68, 182, 203, 213, 245, 246, 271 Elinatein, Albert, 177 Eliade, Mircea, 260 Elizabeth II, 15 Enret, Yunus, 183 Erasmus, xvii, 162 Eve, 56, 58

Gabriel, 124, 266

Fanon, Frantz, 149n14 Felder, Hilarius, 184n79 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 102n2 Ficino, Marsilio, xvii, 109, 138 Forrester, Viviane, 149n14 Francis of Assisi, 89, 207 Frei, Hans W., 178n71

Gadamer, Hans Georg, 161, 180 Galileo, 27, 42 Gandhi, Mahātma, 83, 90n38, 230 Garrigou-Lagrange, Reginald, 102n2, 165n44 Geiselmann, Joseph Rupert, 187n90 Gide, André, 77 Gilson, Étienne, 15, 164n Gispert-Sauch, George, 161n40 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 152n19 González-Faus, José Ignacio, 187n93, 195n15 Gort, Jerald D., 146n4 Graham, Aelred, 184n79 Greene, Graham, 80 Gregory of Nazianzen, 212-13nn47-48 Gregory of Nyssa, 197n18 Gregory Palamas, 89

Haas, Alois M., 130n6 Harnack, Adolf von, 82, 158n32 Hauck, F., 196n16 Haven-Smith, Lance de, 152n19 Heer, Friedrich, 15 Hegel, G. W. F., xx, 279 Heidegger, Martin, 77, 114n2, 164n

Heisenberg, Werner, 250

Guardini, Romano, 81, 125n2, 164n,

165n48

Heraclitus, 214
Herod, 251
Hesburgh, Theodore M., 76n17
Hildegarde von Bingen, 102
Homer, 177
Husserl, Edmund, 252

Ibn 'Arabī, 182, 234 Ignatius of Antioch, 31–32, 145, 270 Irenaeus, 203, 270 Isaac of Nineveh, 32

Jaspers, Karl, 102n2, 118 Jerome, 58, 206n32 Jesus Christ, xvi, xviii, xix, xxi, 4, 7-9, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23-24, 27-28, 31-32, 33, 36, 38-39, 56, 58-61, 65, 67, 68, 73, 82-83, 84, 93, 94, 95, 102, 103, 107-11, 113-21, 123-33, 137, 139, 137, 158-63, 145, 147-56, 168-70, 172-80, 182-89, 193-234, 235-40, 243-75, 277-81, 286 Ioachim de Flores, xix Joan of Arc, xix John, 143, 155, 200, 250 John XXIII, xviii n5, 89, 207 John of the Cross, xix, 131, 216n60, John Damascene, 275 John Paul II, 15, 40, 76n17, 287 Jounet, Charles, 76n14 Judas, 152 Jung, Carl G., 77

Kahlefeld, Heinrich, 184n79 Kant, Immanuel, xx, 169, 183, 185, 230, 254 Karokaran, A., 94n41 Kasper, Walter, 187n93 Katz. Steven, 146n5

Justin, 90, 109, 168

Juvenal, 225n74

Kierkegaard, Søren, 60, 167 Kittel, Gerhard, 193, 206n32 Klostermaier, Klaus K., 157n30 Krishna, 21, 128, 178, 208, 246 Küng, Hans, 82, 92 Kuschel, Karl Josef, 150n15

Lao Tze, 208, 217n62, 225, 230
Law, William, 252
Leaney, A. R. C., 196n16
Lee, Bernard J., 195n14
Lefebre, Marcel, 76n17
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 166
Leo Magnus, 272
Lévinas, Emanuel, 102n2
Llanos, Jose Maria, 76n17
Lombard, Peter, 258
Lonergan, Bernard, 15, 73n5, 102n2
Lull, Ramon, 10
Luther, Martin, xvii, 89, 267

Mahāvīra, 217n62 Maisch, Ingrid, 152n20 Mancini, I., 102n2 Mao Zedong, 177 Marcel, Gabriel, 164n Maritain, Jacques, 15, 164n Martel, Charles, 8 Mary (mother of God), 28, 30, 58, 108, 124, 259 Mary Magdalen, 152 Mascarenhas, Hubert Olympius, 164n43 Massa, Willi, 186n89 Maximus the Confessor, 271, 275 McGinn, Bernard, 144n1 Mersch, Emile, 60 Merton, Thomas, xix Michael (archangel), 31 Michaelis, W., 206n32 Milano, Andrea, 117n6, 119n10, 167n50 Minutius Felix, 10

Molinos, Miguel de, 192
Molinski, Waldemar, 53
Montesquieu, 49
Moses, 136
Mounier, Emmanuel, 164n
Mozoomdar, Protap Chunder
(Pratab Sunder Mazumdar), 82
Muhammad, 198
Müller, Max, 82
Müntzer, Thomas, 267

Naaman, 15 Nédoncelle, Maurice, 164n, 165n44 Newton, Isaac, 55, 180 Nicholas of Cusa, xix, 10 Nicodemus, 124 Nieremberg, Juan Eusebio, 236 Nierzsche, Friedrich, 124 Nishitani, Keiji, 219n66 Noah, 30

Orbe, Antonio. 151n17 Origen, xix, 238, 270 Ortega y Gasset, José, 77, 164, 165n47

Parmenides, 114n2, 131, 136 Pascal, Blaise, xvii, 34 Paul, 28, 29, 32, 33, 59, 60, 81, 89, 90, 107, 126, 127, 128, 130, 136, 148n8, 150, 161, 162, 179, 194, 196, 197, 200-203, 246, 250, 253 Paul VI, 39 Pavan, Antonio, 167n50 Pavan, Milena Carrara, 103 Pelikan, Jarislov, 143n23 Peter, xix, 28, 32, 148n8, 158, 192, 201, 251 Peterson, Erik, 191n10 Philo, 216n60 Piano, S., 181n73

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, xvii, 32, 119 Pilate, Pontius, 153, 160, 251 Pinochet, Augusto, 15, 76n17 Pio, Padre, xix Pius XII, 270, 94n42 Plato, 94, 138, 144, 166, 172, 174, 216n60, 221, 235 Planrus, 162 Plotinus, 94, 138, 172 Pompeius. 4 Porphyrios, 85 Protagoras, 138 Ptolemy, 21, 258 Pythagoras, 217n62 Rahner, Karl, 53, 73, 79n21, 102n2, 152n20, 164n, 274 Rajagopalachari, Chakravarti, 254 Reagan, Ronald, 15 Renwart, Lion, 150n15 Ricci, Matteo, 9

Reagan, Ronald, 15
Renwart, Lion, 150n15
Ricci, Matreco, 9
Richard of St. Victor, 171
Ricoeur, Paul, 75n12, 160n35
Ringgren, Helmer, 193n12
Rosenberg, Alfons, 153n
Rovira Belloso, Joseph Maria, 187n93
Ruh, Kurt, 144n1
Ruiz García, Samuel, 94n41
Russell, Bettrand, 77

Sankara, 136, 161n39, 197n19, 208, 230
Sapphira, 60
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 161, 165
Savonarola, Girolamo, xix
Scheeben, Matthias Joseph, 102n2
Scheler, Max, 164n
Schelling, Friedrich von, 38
Schestow, Leo, 123n1, 189n95
Schillebeeckx, Edward, 148n8, 192

Schiwy, Günther, 186n89
Schmaus, Michael, 102n2
Schoonenberg, Piet, 165, 165n48, 168n58
Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, 118n9
Schweitzer, Albert, 164n
Sen, Keshub Chunder (Sundar), 82
Seneca, 225n74
Sherrard, Philip, 211n46, 229n83
Shiva, 147–48, 238
Smith, Huston, 146n5
Soares-Prabhu, Georges, 156n28
Sobrino, Jon, 76n17, 187n93

Stöckli, Thomas, 186n89 Swidler, Leonard, 152–53n21 Tagore, Rabindranath, 230 Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, xx, 54, 252

Socrates, 174, 217n62, 230, 235

Soloviev, Vladimir, xv

Stier, Fridolin, 202n29

225n74
Teresa of Ávila (Teresa de Jesús), 131, 132, 133, 139, 200, 252
Tertullian, xix, 189, 267, 270, 273
Thérèse de Lisieux, 9
Thomas Aquinas. See Aquinas,

Terentius Publius (Terence), 193,

Thomas

Thompson, William M., 148n8 Tillich, Paul, 102n2 Tilliette, Xavier, 117n6 Toynbee, Alfred, 15 Tracy, David, 90n38 Trebolle, 206n32 first

Upadhyaya, Brahmabandhav, 10–11, 145

Valla, Lorenzo, 269
Vico, Giambarista, xix
Vicrorinus, Marius, 239
Viracocha, 178
Vishnu, 128, 171
Vitoria, Francisco de, 9
Vives, Juan Luis, xvii
Vögtle, Anton, 152n20
Von Balthasar, Hans Urs, 76n17, 102n2, 157n31

Weil, Simone, 77 Weischedel, Wilhelm, 243n2 Williams, Anna M., 196n17 Woods, Richard, 120n13 Wu, John, 11

Zaehner, Robert Charles, 181n73 Zubiri, Xavier, 164n



## INDEX OF ORIGINAL TEXTS IN THIS VOLUME

- "Introduction: Christendom, Christianity, Christianness." Jeevadhara 21, no. 124 (1991): 324–30.
- "The Jordan, The Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness." In *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Plural*istic Theology of Religions, ed. J. Hick and P. F. Knitter, 89–116. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 1987.
- "The Cosmic Christ: A Neglected Aspect of Modern Catholicism." (Original text:
  "El Crist Còsmic: un aspecte negligit del carolicisme modern.") Serra d'Or
  340 (1988): 32–33; in Italian: in La nuova innocenza. Innocenza cosciente.
  Sotto il Monte-Bergamo: Servitium, 2003; rev. ed. 2005. Translated into
  English by Geraldine Clarkson.
- "The New Role of Christian Universities in Asia." Vidyajpoti 54 (1990): 561-82. Also in M. Uozumi and M. Kasai, eds., Religious Consciousness and Modern World, Asian Cultural Studies, Special Issue no. 4, 169-85. Tokyo: International Christian University, 1993. Opening lecture at ACUCA (Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia) held at Assumption University, Thalland, 1989.
- "Universal Reponsibility: A Christian Consideration." In R. Ch. Tewari and Krishna Nath, eds. Universal Responsibility: A Felicitation Volume in Honour of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, on His Sixtieth Birthday, 51–62. New Delhi: ANB Publishers.
- "Towards a Phenomenology of Interculturation: The Case of India." Original text:

  "Verso una fenomenologia dell'interculturazione: Il caso dell'India." Testimonianze 4–5 (1996): 83–90. Translated by Geraldine Clarkson.
- "On Christian Identity: Who Is a Christian?" In Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity, ed. C. Cornille, 121–44. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Christophany: The Fullness of Man. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987. Original text: La pienezza dell'uomo. Una cristofania. Milan: Jaca Book, 1999, 2002.
- All original texts have been partially revised by the author.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An international authority on spirituality, the study of religions, and interculural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar has made intercultural and dialogical pluralism one of the hallmarks of his research, becoming a master "bridge builder," tireless in the promotion of dialogue between Western culture and the great Oriental Hindū and Buddhist traditions.

Born in 1918 in Barcelona of a Spanish Catholic mother and an Indian Hindū father, he is part of a plurality of traditions: Indian and European, Hindū and Christian, scientific and humanistic.

Panikkar holds degrees in chemistry, philosophy, and theology, and was ordained a Arbolic priest in 1946. He has delivered courses and lectures in major European, Indian, and American universities.

A member of the International Institute of Philosophy (Paris), of the permanent Tribunal of the Peoples (Rome), and of the UNESCO Commission for intercultural dialogue, he has also founded various philosophical journals and intercultural study centers. He has held conferences in each of the five continents (including the renowned Gifford Lectures in 1988–1989 on "Trinity and Atheism").

Panikkar has received international recognitions including honorary doctorates from the University of Tübingien in 2004, Urbino in 2005, and Girona in 2008, as well as prizes ranging from the "Premio Menéndez Pelayo de Humanidades" for his book El concepto de naturaleza in Madrid in 1946 to the "Premio Nonino 2001 a un maestro del nostro tempo" in Italy.

Since 1982 he has lived in Taverret in the Catalonian mountains, where he continues his contemplative experience and cultural activities. There he founded more presides over the intercultural study center Vivarium. Panikkar has published more than fifty books in various languages and hundreds of articles on the philosophy of religion, theology, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and Indology.

From the dialogue between religions to the peaceful cohabitation of peoples; from reflections on the future of the technological society to major work on political and social intelligence; from the recognition that all interreligious dialogue is based on an intrareligious dialogue to the promotion of open knowledge of other religions, of which he is a mediator; from his penetrating analysis of the crisis in spirituality to the practice of meditation and the rediscovery of his monastic identity; from the invitation of colligite fragmenta as a path toward the integration of reality to the proposal of a new innocence, Panikkar embodies a personal journey of fulfillment.

Among his most important publications with Orbis are: Velo della realtà (2000); L'incontro indispensabile: dialogo delle religioni (2001); Pace e interculturalità. Una riflessione filosofica (2002, 2006); La realtà cosmoteandrica. Dio-Uomo-Mondo (2004); L'esperienza della vita. La mistica (2005); La gioia pasquale, La presenza di Dio and Maria (2007); Il Cristo sconociuto dell'induismo (2008).

